ARGENTINA
PAST AND PRESENT

W. H. KOEBEL

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ARGENTINA: PAST AND PRESENT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PORTUGAL: ITS LAND AND PEOPLE
MADEIRA, OLD AND NEW
MODERN ARGENTINA
THE SINGULAR REPUBLIC
THE ANCHORAGE
THE RETURN OF JOE
THE SEAT OF MOODS

THE IGUAZÚ FALLS

ARGENTINA

PAST AND PRESENT

BY

W. H. KOEBEL

AUTHOR OF 'MODERN ARGENTINA' 'MADEIRA, OLD AND NEW'
'PORTUGAL: ITS LAND AND PEOPLE'

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PREFACE

THE sympathetic reception accorded some five years ago to 'Modern Argentina' has, I hope, justified an attempt to produce a more comprehensive picture of the great Southern Republic than it has been possible for me to effect before. Notwithstanding the short time that has elapsed since the publication of my last volume on the country, further travellings in the provinces of the River Plate have revealed not only fresh districts, but so many noteworthy alterations in those already visited, that I may claim that the present matter is almost entirely concerned with subjects and points of view that are fresh, so far as my own efforts are concerned.

For the assistance rendered to my work I have every reason to express a deep sense of obligation. Indeed, the courteous encouragement and help rendered by the Argentine authorities from the highest to the lowest grades were of a nature to verify to the full a great man's acknowledgment of similar characteristics. Eighty years ago, according to Darwin: 'The very general toleration of foreign religions, the regard paid to the means of education,

the freedom of the press, the facilities offered to all foreigners, and especially, as I am bound to add, to everyone professing the humblest pretensions to science, should be recollected with gratitude by those who have visited Spanish America.'

As I have had occasion to remark in a later chapter, there are few who will not concur heartily with this, and with even better reason, in the light of present-day affairs. For my part, the generous Argentine courtesy extended to an itinerant writer must ever remain a fresh and very pleasant memory.

To enumerate fully the list of those gentlemen to whom I am indebted is impossible, and if the names of many are omitted here the reason lies in a want of space rather than in a dearth of the sense of recognition.

To their excellencies Doctor La Plaza, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President elect, and to Señor Don Pedro Ezcurra, Minister of Agriculture, I have to express my deep obligation both for the invaluable assistance rendered and the interest displayed. The sympathy so freely extended by these highly placed officials, in common with the President himself and the rest of the Ministry, to the foreign searcher after knowledge, has invariably been of a nature to compel gratitude and admiration on the part of those whom the history and modern conditions of the Republic has led to Argentine soil.

To his excellency Don Florencio L. Dominguez, Minister of the Argentine Republic in London,

Señor Don Vicente J. Dominguez, First Secretary of Legation, and to Señor Don Carlos Dominguez, Attaché, the bearers of a name that has now so long worthily represented Argentina in England, as it has stood out in the history of the Republic itself, I have to return most cordial thanks. Consulted on points of doubt that arose subsequently to my return, the knowledge and experience of the distinguished members of the Argentine Legation in London has been imparted in a generous and unsparing fashion.

In addition, my acknowledgments are tendered to the governors of numerous provinces, and to officials such as Señor Don Adrian Penard, Hijo, and Señor Don Arturo B. Carranza, whose literary and statistical work has proved of great value as a financial guide.

Before concluding my thanks to the officials of the Republic it is essential to refer to the recent publications of the Government—the massive works on live-stock and agriculture, for the production of which Señor Don Alberto B. Martinez is responsible in conjunction with Doctor José Léon Súarez and Señor Don Emilio Lahitte. The articles by these gentlemen, and those by Señores Godofredo Daireaux, Francisco Latzina, Herbert Gibson, E. Herrero Ducloux, Pablo Lavenir, Ricardo Palencia, Fernando Mauduit, Enrique Fynn, Ricardo Pillado, Carlos D. Girola, Carlos Spegazzini, Ramón Bidart, and W. G. Davis are altogether admirable. The work is

extremely comprehensive and of great interest. Monumental to the Spanish reader both in bulk and scope, it is a source into which I have delved for many facts.

Other prominent Argentines to whom I would express my indebtedness are: Señor Don Miguel Alfredo Martinez de Hoz, Doctor Juan Antonio Argerich, Señor Don Nicolas Mihanovich, Hijo, and the Señores Don Nicolas and Don Venturo Calvo.

Very kindly assistance has also been rendered by Mr. Walter Townly, H.B.M. Minister in Buenos Aires, as well as by the following gentlemen: Messrs. John Alexander, Francis Bradney, Carlisle, F. W. Clunie, H. W. Cousins, Henry Darbyshire, E. A. Duffield, Fleming, F. Freund, C. E. Gunther, R. L. Gunther, Santiago Ham, W. Kemp, J. T. Leitch, J. Maclean, Mahn, Stanley Mallet, S. Murphy, M. Murphy, W. Scheibler, J. Macdonald Sewell, Alberto Schmied, Tanner, John Ward.

For information concerning the railways my acknowledgments to a number of the London officials of the companies, and, so far as Argentina is concerned, in particular to Messrs. Percy Clarke, Colman, and Iles, of the Great Southern; Messrs. Goudge, Bowden, and Mitchell, of the Buenos Aires and Pacific; Messrs. Follett Holt, Thompson, Brewer, Wilson, and M. W. Parish of the Entre Rios; and to Mr. James L. Harper, of the North Eastern.

For the photographs of the Iguazú falls I am indebted to Mr. A. Schmidt, and for a number of

those depicting pastoral scenes to the Lemco and Oxo Company, whose courtesy I am glad to take this opportunity of acknowledging.

Part of the first chapter has already appeared in the *Times*, and is reproduced by the courtesy of Mr. Moberly Bell. I have also to thank the editors respectively of the *Globe* and *Graphic* for permission to include some matter that first saw light in their pages.

W. H. KOEBEL.

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ARGENTINA: PAST AND PRESENT

CHAPTER I

DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION

Argentina and the Promise of the New World—The Visions of the *Conquistador*—Discovery and its Commercial Aspects—The River Plate and the Shadow of the Mine Lands—Status of the Province—Situation at the Time of Argentina's Discovery—The Voyage of Americo Vespucio—Juan Diaz de Solis Sails up the La Plata River—Death of Solis at the Hands of Indians—Return of the Expedition—Visit of Magellanes—Expeditions of Diego Garcia and Sebastian Cabot—Cabot's Feats of Exploration—An Attempted Settlement—The Pioneer's Reception in Spain—A Portugese Venture—Pedro de Mendoza, First Governor of the River Plate—His Fleet and Equipment—A Disastrous Voyage—First Settlement at Buenos Aires—Theories Concerning the Origin of the Name—Vicissitudes of the Colony—Hostility of the Indians—Death of Pedro de Mendoza.

It is only in accordance with human inability to judge of the future that Argentina, to-day the richest of South American states, should have been explored and colonised for the routes it promised to Peru and the north-west rather than from any expectation of benefit from its own resources. The hope that at the end of the fifteenth century sent

men from Europe out into the unknown was certainly not that of agricultural success, with all its ethics of sustained effort and comparatively humdrum results. It was a vision of gold—of shiploads of gold swept up from lands where the precious metal should lie as thickly as stones upon European roads—that sent out the pioneers in their frail fleets which, almost as often as not, lost a quota of their number ere the remaining vessels, battered and weatherworn, found their home port again.

In justice to these early navigators it must be admitted that their highest expectations would not have been incompatible in the way of reward for this utterly daring and strenuous voyaging. From Columbus onwards (who to the end clung to his illusions as tenaciously as his ships to the course he had marked for them), not a single one of these early and most brilliant pioneers met with any adequate material compensation. Fame they enjoyed, it is true, a fame that was never more richly deserved, though frequently it was accorded, on the broad and condoning basis that success demands, for what they did rather than for the means employed.

But it was not celebrity alone that the pioneers awaited in exchange for the reckless sacrifice of humanitarian tenets. With subsidies to be wrung from royalty and doubting merchants, the most reckless expedition ever planned possessed its commercial side, its worries of debit and credit, and it

was many a despairing effort to make good the promises of financial success that sent the tens of thousands of aborigines to their death. And the majority of these natives, ground out of existence by their enforced labour in search of gold, died in vain. The reward, when it came, was reserved for the later arrivals with a fuller knowledge of the new continent that was revealing its secrets with increasing rapidity as it became more completely dominated by the augmented bands of European explorers and adventurers.

Thus it was that the broad and level prairies that fringe the La Plata river failed in the first instance to attract the measure of interest they deserved. Many of the *conquistadores*, it is true, brought out in their small, tossing vessels horses, mules, cattle, sheep, and goats. Indeed, the populating of the country with such animals was usually enforced by a clause in the royal concession to the pioneer. This importation, however, was intended to serve as an immediate means of subsistence, rather than as a commencement of a purely pastoral era. As a proof of this, the first horses, cattle, and other animals that tasted the grass of the pampa were not introduced directly from Spain. They filtered through to the south-west after the lapse of a number of years from Peru by way of Bolivia, neither of these countries, when compared with the rich plains of Argentina, possessing any pastoral possibilities whatever.

It was, indeed, a couple of centuries and more ere Argentina emerged from the shadow which the mine lands to the north-west had super-imposed upon its fertile stretches. Even then, the grudging acknowledgment of its commercial importance failed to obtain for the country its proper status as a first-class colony. A vassal state of Peru, it long remained at the mercy of the whims of that most ancient, pompous, and already somewhat effete vice-royalty. As though this were not enough, it owed allegiance to Chile in addition, the latter colony being endowed with higher rank than the River Plate.

Not until 1776, some two centuries and a half after its foundation, did Argentina become independent of its neighbours. Once imbued with the taste of freedom, it was not long ere the nation deposed its own viceroy, and threw off the final remaining yoke, that of Spain, the motherland itself. This occurred a little more than thirty years after the date of its first, and partial, independence. For a rapid sketch of one or two of the events that led up to this culminating point in Argentine history, it is necessary to return, and to start at the commencement of the story of the land. The discovery of Argentina was marked by none of that acclamation with which the earlier feats of the great navigators were received. The old world, though its appetite for the new was yearly becoming further sharpened, had lost its first and tremendous sense of astonishment. The

dramatic element had already yielded a little to that of the commercial. The mountainous and mineral-promising lands to the north had been subjected to the feverish visitations on the part of the famous band of Spaniards, Portuguese, and of the Italians in the service of both countries. Pope Alexander VI had drawn a line from pole to pole, and flung a continent apiece to Spain and Portugal in easy conformity with the Titanic spirit of the age—a feat of parcelling that was more admired at the time of its making than ever subsequently. Traffic, settlement, and conquest were already in active being.

Once south of Brazil, it is certain enough that the lowly and insignificant coast line of the plains held out little promise to the early sixteenth-century navigator. So little so, indeed, that in 1501 Americo Vespucio, who, although some historians deny it, almost certainly penetrated as far south as latitude fifty-one, and thus won to Tierra del Fuego, took little notice of the coast he passed as he cleft his way through the virgin waters. He told of sandy and barren soil and of tempests that drove him northwards once more. Yet, though he made little enough of the matter, he must have been the first who set eyes upon the River Plate and upon the Argentine coast.

It was not until fourteen years later that the land now known as Argentina may be said to have been discovered in an effectual fashion. In 1515 Juan Diaz de Solis started from the port of Lepe near

Huelva on his third voyage of discovery. As had become customary, the enterprise was conducted on commercial lines, with royalty as a sleeping partner. King Ferdinand of Spain invested four thousand ducats in the expedition, and thus became entitled to a third share of any profits that might result; the remainder of the necessary capital was found by Solis himself.

Solis made the coast of Brazil in due course. Not content with this, he worked his way southwards until he arrived at latitude thirty-five. Here, in the estuary of the La Plata river, he came to a current of brown water of so fresh a nature that he gave it the name of *Mar Dulce*—the freshwater sea. Scenting a discovery of some importance, he left his ships at anchor, and sailed up the great stream as far as the island of Martin Garcia, where he and his party disembarked. It was here that ill-fortune overtook Solis. The island was populated by fierce and warlike Indians, probably a tribe of the Querandies who were wont to roam the pampa. In an ill-advised moment Solis endeavoured to secure one of these in order that the warrior might accompany the expedition home, and there be duly exhibited as a specimen of the manhood of this new country. In this instance the collector's zeal proved fatal. Solis and his company fell into an ambush, and, overwhelmed by flights of arrows, the party retreated to their vessels, leaving the bodies of the leader and of nine others dead upon the island.

Utterly discouraged by this calamity, the remainder of the expedition, in command of Francisco de Torres, a relative of de Solis, returned to Spain. The enterprise had proved disastrous in every respect, since almost its only fruits were some Brazilian timber, a small native girl, and seventy-six sealskins !

After this it was some years ere the River Solis, as the scene of the tragedy was then called, was visited. In 1520 Magellanes, the famous Portuguese in the service of Spain, stayed his fleet at the spot, and explored its mouth. But his halt was a short one. Continuing south, he passed into the Pacific by the straits that bear his name, and thus completed one of the most notable voyages ever made by an early navigator.

It was not until 1526 that the River Solis again received serious attention. Then it was visited by two expeditions that arrived almost simultaneously at the spot. On January 15, 1526, Diego Garcia sailed with his fleet from Finisterre. On April 3 of the same year Sebastian Cabot set out with the Moluccas for his destination. This expedition of Cabot's, it should be mentioned, was another of those favoured by royal interest, since King Carlos V of Spain, on a profit-sharing understanding, produced four thousand of the ten thousand ducats that were necessary to defray expenses.

Diego Garcia's voyage was undertaken in a leisurely fashion. So lengthy were his halts that

considerably more than a year elapsed ere his vessels breasted the great estuary of the Plate. Sailing up the broad stream, he met with Cabot—whom chance had led to the spot and who had arrived before him—at the confluence of the Paraguay and Paraná. Cabot, although little loved by his crews, had performed notable feats of exploration in the face of the Indian attacks. He had founded the settlement of San Salvador at the mouth of the Uruguay river, and that of Sancti Spiritus on the spot where Carcaraña now stands. From there he had sailed upwards to explore the northern regions of the Paraguay itself.

Shortly after the meeting of the two expeditions Diego Garcia returned to Spain, while Cabot sent a vessel to that country bearing letters that explained his discoveries and that begged for assistance both in the shape of men and provisions. Awaiting these, he remained in the country, spending his time in cruising between the forts of Sancti Spiritus and San Salvador. Of the assistance for which he hoped, however, no sign was forthcoming, and the situation of the adventurous band became desperate. At length a terrible catastrophe brought matters to a head. The small garrison of Sancti Spiritus was treacherously attacked by the Indians, and all but a few were massacred. The survivors, escaping on board a vessel that was anchored near the spot, bore the news of the tragedy to San Salvador.

A council of war decided that the position was

no longer tenable in the face of Indian hostility and of the terrible dearth of provisions. The small fleet with its attenuated crews sailed homewards, arriving at Seville in August 1530. If Cabot had looked for a triumphal reception he must have been bitterly disappointed. No sooner had he landed than he was proceeded against on the charge of insubordination, and of arrogating to himself the field of discovery that had been entrusted to Garcia.

In the meanwhile Portugal, its eyes turned towards the new southern territories, had not been idle. At the end of 1530 a formidable expedition under Martin Alonso de Souza left Lisbon, and explored the Rio de la Plata, the navigators being much impressed by the fertility of the scene. It became necessary for Spain to look to its laurels lest this corner of the new world should slip from its grasp. Various negotiations were carried on by the government with a view to finding a person suited to the task of colonising the River Plate provinces.

After some delay Don Pedro de Mendoza was chosen for the purpose. Mendoza, an adventurous soldier of good birth, had grown rich in the course of various campaigns. Both his purse, therefore, and his reckless spirit were peculiarly adapted to this arduous undertaking. Indeed, the forces that the new leader collected for the purpose were by far the largest and best equipped of any that had previously started for the Rio de la Plata. One authority gives the number of vessels as eleven, and that of the

men as eight hundred, while another increases the estimate of the former to fourteen, and that of the latter to twelve hundred.

In any case the fleet was imposing, and the expedition was officered by many nobles and persons of distinction, including Juan de Osorio, Diego de Mendoza, Juan de Ayolas, Juan and Felipe de Caceres, Salazar de Espinosa, Francisco de Mendoza, Domingo Martinez de Irala, and numerous others. Under such favourable auspices the fleet set sail in August 1535. In those days, however, the terrors of the sea were very real indeed, and a voyage without serious incident meant an extraordinary piece of good fortune. Mendoza's well-equipped fleet met with no better fate than the lesser collections of craft. When to the south of Ecuador, a furious tempest dispersed the vessels. Two were disabled, while the remainder made their way as best they could to Rio de Janeiro.

At this place Pedro de Mendoza aroused an intense outburst of resentment on the part of his adherents by the wanton execution of Juan de Osorio, one of his chief officials—an act that lost him the services of a certain number of the adventurers, who resolved to accompany their leader no further. In any case the main fleet, from want of drinking water, was unable to proceed upon its way without some delay. The departure, however, was hastened by Mendoza from fear of further desertions. The expedition set sail, proceeded southwards without

further incident, entered the River Plate, and came to an anchor at the mouth of the small tributary Riachuelo, where the city of Buenos Aires now stands.

As to the origin of this name there are two theories. According to one, the first man who stepped ashore is held to have cried exultantly : ' Qué *buenos aires* son los de este suelo ! ' (What fine air there is in this country !) According to another, the sailors of the expedition had been recruited from Cadiz, whose seamen were specially under the protection of the Virgin Mary *de los Buenos Aires*. It is difficult to say which of the two is the correct version.

It was here that Pedro de Mendoza founded the first real town that Argentine soil had known. The settlement, however, was precarious, and the gloomy vicissitudes that attended its first brief existence began with the very inception of the colony. A combat with the Indians—the cause of which, according to Spanish historians, lay at the door of the *conquistadores*—was the preliminary to a continuous state of warfare. From the force of the incessant attacks of the fierce native warriors the settlers became practically beleaguered within the confines of the newly-established town. A second fort, that of Sancti Spiritus, was established on the site of Cabot's short-lived settlement higher up the river ; but the hostility of the surrounding Indians rendered its case little better than that of Buenos Aires.

Pedro de Mendoza, the founder of Buenos Aires,

set out for Spain a little more than a year after the small town had been built. It was not his fortune, however, to set eyes upon the *Madre Patria* again. Dying upon the voyage, the first governor of the Rio de la Plata was buried at sea. His unexpected end was the cause of no little dissension and of numerous struggles for power on the part of the *conquistadores* who remained in the country that was already officially acknowledged as a colony of Spain.

CHAPTER II

SOME EARLY COLONIAL EPISODES

Juan de Ayolas—His Northward Voyage—Founding of Asuncion —Ayolas makes for Peru—The Trust of Domingo Martinez de Irala—Francisco Ruiz Galan—His Ambition and Methods —The Struggle for Governorship—Irala's Loyalty—The Cost of Intrigue—Death of Ayolas—Irala becomes Governor —Abandonment of Buenos Aires—Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca takes over the Rule—Discontent and Revolt— Reappointment of Irala—A Firm Governor—Disciplinary Measures applied to Malcontents—Irala's Office confirmed by the King of Spain—Some Characteristics of a Great *Conquistador*.

ONE of the most tragic occurrences in the entire history of the La Plata Provinces came about during this first and precarious occupation of Buenos Aires, although the details of the drama were enacted on the banks of the Paraguay river, a thousand miles and more to the north of the harassed coastal fort. In order clearly to follow the course of this particular story it is necessary to pick out its thread baldly from the confusion of the numerous contemporaneous happenings, ignoring a mass of important events in order to follow some incidents in the careers of two bold and admirable men: Juan de Ayolas and Domingo Martinez de Irala.

Juan de Ayolas had sailed out from Spain in the company of Pedro de Mendoza, being, indeed, one of the chief officers of the expedition. In 1536 Pedro de Mendoza, just previous to embarking for Spain, sent Juan de Ayolas northwards with an expedition of his own to explore the rivers Paraná and Paraguay, principally with the object of discovering a road to Peru. He instructed the pioneer, moreover, to found a strategic settlement in a convenient spot.

This done, Mendoza sailed down stream to Buenos Aires, while Ayolas, in obedience to his orders, proceeded up the river, successfully resisting the attacks of the Indians as he went, until he arrived at the confluence of the Pilcomayo and the Paraguay. Here he founded the fortified township of Asuncion, and succeeded in making peace with the Indians in the neighbourhood. Having thus fulfilled the first portion of his duties, Ayolas sailed yet further up the river until he came to a natural port that he christened La Candelaria. This appearing to him the most favourable point from which to strike north-west into Peru, the commander halted at the spot. Ere starting he made careful dispositions. Domingo Martinez de Irala, the second in command, was left in charge of the ships and of a force of forty men, with orders to await his chief for the space of four months. Then the intrepid Ayolas plunged boldly through the forest into the unknown.

Shortly after his departure a second Spanish expedition appeared unexpectedly at the spot, under

the captains Gonzalo de Mendoza and Juan de Salazar. On the eve of his departure, it appeared, Pedro de Mendoza had sent these to the assistance of Ayolas. The prompt measures of the latter, however, had rendered this aid somewhat belated, so the joint forces cruised up and down for a while. In the end Gonzalo de Mendoza remained at Asuncion with a garrison of forty men; Juan de Salazar descended to Buenos Aires to give an account of his voyage, while Irala, having obtained fresh supplies, returned to La Candelaria in order to await Ayolas.

At this point the cloven hoof enters into human affairs—supplied by none of these daring *conquistadores*, but by the temporary governor of Buenos Aires, Francisco Ruiz Galan. It is certain that the governorship of Buenos Aires at that period was no sinecure. With the hostile Indians raging without the barrier and famine rampant within, the possibility of a change of air was doubtless sufficiently tempting. Yet without a plausible excuse an excursion into a more pleasant zone was clearly out of the question. The arrival at Buenos Aires of Salazar with the news of Ayolas' disappearance into the interior supplied just one of those opportunities that are the mothers of evil as well as of good. Ruiz Galan saw an opening for his talent in the comparatively peaceful north!

With six vessels and over two hundred men the governor of Buenos Aires set sail up the river. As ill luck would have it, his advent in Asuncion

coincided with that of Irala, who had descended the river for the second time in quest of the indispensable provisions, without which it was impossible for him to remain at his post at La Candaleria. As a matter of fact, the stipulated time of waiting had now long been exceeded; but the staunch Irala, filled with faith in his commander's ability, cared nothing for that. The meeting with Galan, however, proved fatal to his plans.

Galan, discovering with no little relief the continued absence of Ayolas, proclaimed himself commander of the district. Irala, resenting hotly this attempted usurpation of his leader's authority, opposed the illegal claims of the newcomer to the utmost of his power. A violent dispute ensued; but, alas! might undoubtedly lay with the comparatively powerful forces of Galan. The quarrel culminated in the refusal of this latter to grant a vessel to Irala wherein he might return to La Candaleria. There is a possibility of a double motive in this that—although not generally remarked by historians—would stamp the act as trebly villainous, did it actually obtain.

Irala stormed and raged, and in the end succeeded in obtaining the required vessel. But it was the autumn of 1538 ere the faithful lieutenant was enabled to hasten back to his post once more. Here he remained for months, watching ceaselessly for the chief who, all unknown to Irala, was lying dead in the neighbouring forest. For Ayolas, though

delayed and weary, had justified his lieutenant's confidence to the full. Through Indians and forests, swamps and rivers, he had won his way as far as the mountains of the Charcas. Returning, laden with gold and silver, he had marched back, and, doubtless filled with joy at his success, had come out on the banks of the Paraguay at La Candelaria. There his triumph must immediately have changed to dismay, since the river was empty, and no Irala at the spot to greet him. Hurt to the quick, he remained in vain waiting—while in Asuncion Galan was refusing his lieutenant the vessel that would have saved him! After a while the Indians, drawing their own conclusions from the non-appearance of a succouring vessel, massacred the small party to a man, and thus the brave Ayolas met his end. A bitter period for Ayolas; and many grief-tainted years for Irala! For the pure tragedy caused by the intervention of a mean spirit amidst gallant and staunch men, the drama of the episode is scarcely to be exceeded.

In the meanwhile Galan, rejoicing in the fulfilment of his ambition, proclaimed himself governor. After which he descended the stream to Buenos Aires in order to ascertain how matters fared at that unfortunate settlement. The career of the usurper, however, was destined to be as chequered as it deserved. Shortly after his arrival a well-laden vessel, the *Marañona,* completed her voyage from Spain, and dropped anchor in the La Plata river. In command

of the ship was Alonso de Cabrera, and Galan's new authority was challenged by this high official. In the end a compromise was effected. The two agreed to govern jointly, and shortly afterwards, with the greater part of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires, they proceeded north to Asuncion.

Here they met Irala, who had just returned from a third period of waiting at La Candelaria. The conference that ensued deprived Galan of the last shred of his brief power. Cabrera without hesitation acknowledged the jurisdiction of Irala, as lieutenant of Ayolas, under whose orders he placed himself. Galan, for his part, embittered and disappointed, disappears from the stage, having sacrificed the life of Ayolas in vain.

No sooner was the arrangement completed than Irala, in whom faith was as unquenchable as duty, returned to La Candelaria for the fourth time, leaving Cabrera in command of Asuncion. On this occasion Irala learned of the tragic fate that had befallen his chief. With the death of Ayolas the long watch of the staunch lieutenant was at an end. The authority and power to which he had hoped to bring back his chief fell, unsought, to his share. For when he had sailed sadly back to Asuncion his officers and soldiers enthusiastically proclaimed him governor and captain-general.

Having once accepted the office thus thrust upon him, Irala took up the reins of government with an extraordinarily firm hand. Almost his first act was

one that had become a necessity—the abandonment of the expiring settlement of Buenos Aires. The buildings were destroyed, and the inhabitants removed to Asuncion, while at Sancti Spiritus a letter was placed in a gourd to tell the news to any future Spanish force that might arrive. Buenos Aires and the southern plains were given back to the Indian dominion that was to last for another forty years.

Notwithstanding the affection with which he inspired his subordinates, the fortunes of Irala were as mutable as those of any pioneer of the period. The career of a *conquistador* was not only at the mercy of climate, Indians, and rival factions : it was influenced as well by decrees and appointments from far-away Spain that had an unpleasant habit of upsetting the calculations of a budding settlement at a moment's notice. In those days of perilous and lengthy voyages a new appointment was announced by no postal preliminaries. It was made known by the arrival of its holder—an advent that involved a change of power at a moment's notice.

The court of Spain, considering Irala's appointment only temporary, sent out Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca to take up the governorship of the new Southern Provinces. Alvar Nuñez, arriving in the La Plata river with a strong force, was naturally a little dismayed at the discovery of the letter telling of the abandonment of the first settlements and of the translation to Asuncion. However, after

a long and arduous journey, principally by land, the new governor arrived safely at Asuncion in 1542, and took over the reins of office from Irala. The latter, falling abruptly from commander to subordinate, was sent upon the tracks of Ayolas, and effected some excellent work of exploration in the course of a second attempt to discover a road to Peru.

It was not long ere the wheel of fortune turned once more. Discontent with the rule of Alvar Nuñez—how far its cause was justified is open to doubt—reached a head in 1544. The settlers, rising, shipped the unpopular official back to the mother country, where he was first imprisoned, and afterwards released, and pensioned. Irala was again raised to power, suffering on this occasion from the disadvantages of enmity on the part of a faction of the colonists, headed by Felipe de Caceres, an especial partizan of Alvar Nuñez.

The firmness of Irala, however, subdued for the moment the warring sections of the *conquistadores*. He was fortunate in the possession of a lieutenant, Nuflo de Chaves, who was as loyal to him as he himself had been devoted to Ayolas. It was necessary that the new governorship should be officially confirmed. To this end Nuflo de Chaves departed on a perilous mission to the high authorities in Peru, while Irala boldly left the faction-torn town of Asuncion in the charge of Francisco de Mendoza, he himself setting out to explore the north-west.

As he might have foreseen, Irala's enemies took

full advantage of his absence. These, hoping to win the temporary commander to their side, offered the governorship to Francisco de Mendoza. He, thoroughly loyal to his chief, feigned to accept, with the idea of handing over the authority to Irala on his return. On the eve of his election, Mendoza's plan was suspected. He was immediately put to death, and Diego de Abreu was named governor in his stead.

All this was very well in the absence of the chief person concerned. But Irala was a man to be reckoned with, and, hardened as he was by continual strife and tumult, his methods were growing no gentler with his years. At the beginning of 1549 he returned to Asuncion with sword and fire, and utterly crushed the opposing faction. Abreu himself and some of his chief partizans fled into the woods, where they passed a miserable existence. Two other prominent opponents, Riquelme de Guzman and Ortiz de Zárate, were captured. The methods employed by Irala towards their submission show him in the light of a conjugal cynic. As it happened, he possessed two daughters, Ursula and Marina. He offered his prisoners the choice of two fates—death or marriage! Needless to say, Guzman and Zárate sped with almost indecent haste to the altar. The pair became Irala's sons-in-law, and, in consequence, his allies.

Meanwhile the court of Spain, ignorant or heedless of the things that were passing in the Rio de la Plata, appointed Juan de Sanabria as governor.

The latter dying in Spain ere the expedition was prepared, the post was granted to his son. At this period the fates were undoubtedly propitious to Irala; for the fleet of Diego de Sanabria failed to reach the Rio de la Plata at all, meeting with shipwreck at the mouth of the Orinoco river. When the news of this disaster reached Spain Irala came into his own. In November 1552, after more than ten years of actual authority, Domingo Martinez de Irala was for the first time officially proclaimed by the king as governor of the Rio de la Plata Provinces. Active and intrepid to the last, the great *conquistador* remained in office until his death at the age of seventy —an unusually lengthy life for one so abounding in deeds and dangers.

Irala has his detractors. It is alleged against him amongst other things that he allowed undue licence to his soldiery, that his methods at times were arbitrary and harsh, and that he was responsible for the system of *encomienda* by which the Indians became enslaved, and were forced to yield their labour to the conquerors of the land. Yet it has been held out with equal justice that his faults were the faults of the age. His methods were certainly no different from those of the other pioneers at a period when the grasping of new possessions was marked by a territorial scramble in which the hindmost went landless and luckless. In the case of Irala, however, it was the man's sheer force of character that served to accentuate the normal means employed.

A HAUL OF FISH ON THE LA PLATA RIVER

It was Irala, moreover, who wrung law and order from out of the seething elemental forces that had over-run the land, who established the first genuine system of government, and who caused it to be respected and obeyed. Loyal and intrepid, a fierce enemy and a faithful friend, Irala deserves a higher place amongst the ranks of the *conquistadores* than is generally accorded him.

CHAPTER III

THE FOUNDATION OF BUENOS AIRES

Francisco Ortiz de Vergara—Intrigues during his Governorship—The Ambition of Nuflo de Chaves—He founds a New State—A Bold Plot—Vergara Imprisoned—Various Claimants to Power in Paraguay—The success of Ortiz de Zárate—His Voyage to Spain—Felipe de Caceres Temporary Ruler—Nuflo de Chaves sets a Second Trap—Death of Nuflo de Chaves—Struggle between Church and State—Caceres sent as Prisoner to Spain—Return of Zárate—His Rescue from the Indians by Juan de Garay—Death of Zárate—Mendieta's Fate—Garay made Governor of Paraguay—A Notable Ruler—Foundation of the City of Buenos Aires—Some Historical Names.

THE circumstances that preceded the second, and permanent, foundation of Buenos Aires are a little involved. With the death of Irala the struggle for the authority that the late ruler had wielded so firmly became almost incessant. Claimants for the envied post sprang up as thickly as grass shoots, and each brought his own contribution of intrigue to swell the general *melée* of the contest.

The confusion took some time to mature, it is true. Ere his death Irala had named as his successor one of his sons-in-law, Gonzalo de Mendoza. The latter's right to the governorship was acknowledged by all;

but Mendoza's rule was short, since his death occurred the same year that he assumed the power. In order to fill the vacant post the *conquistadores* held an election, which resulted in the nomination of Francisco Ortiz de Vergara, another son-in-law of Irala's.

Vergara assumed control of the colony in 1558, and for a year peace and prosperity reigned in Asuncion itself, while an Indian rising was promptly quelled by the governor himself and two of his lieutenants, Alonso de Riquelme and Diaz Melgarejo. Then occurred the situation that seemed at this period to obsess every new governor elected by local vote. It was necessary for Vergara to obtain the sanction of his governorship from the higher colonial authorities in Charcas. In the end Vergara decided to make the application in person, and, together with Bishop Latorre, prepared himself for the long journey.

There were, however, elements to be reckoned with of whose existence Vergara had no suspicion. Nuflo de Chaves, Irala's old lieutenant, had been occupied in a lengthy and daring series of explorations in the north and west that had kept him in ignorance of all the recent developments in Asuncion itself. Learning at length of the death of Irala and of Mendoza, his restless spirit immediately became filled with ambitious desire. Thoroughly staunch to his original chief as Chaves had proved himself, his loyalty to the powers in being ended abruptly with the death of his old comrade-in-arms. He

resolved to set himself up in opposition to Vergara, and to found a province of his own that should be independent of Paraguay. His intention, communicated to his soldiers, met with little response. The majority returned to Asuncion, leaving their leader with a reduced company of seventy men.

Nuflo de Chaves, undismayed, came down to the banks of the Pilcomayo to the west of the Chaco, where he had decided to institute this new province of his own. To his chagrin he found the country already occupied by Andres Manso, who had come there from Peru, having been authorised by the viceroy, Hurtado de Mendoza, to colonise the neighbourhoods east of the Andes. A conflict between the rival companies seemed imminent; but strife was eventually obviated by an agreement between the two chiefs to refer their respective claims to the viceroy of Peru. Chaves the indefatigable started post haste to Lima, laid his case before the viceroy, and indirectly obtained exactly that which he had desired. The viceroy, consenting to the foundation of a new state in the disputed area, named as its governor his son, Garcia Hurtado de Mendoza, who, in turn, relegated the functions of authority to Nuflo de Chaves. The *conquistador*, rejoicing, returned to the province that was now his own, and founded there the city of Santa Cruz.

Nuflo de Chaves was now tasting of the first fruits of actual power. The effect of his still unsatisfied ambition was to spur him onwards into a maëlstrom

of intrigue. Learning of the projected journey of Vergara, and of Bishop Latorre, he sent word to Asuncion recommending the plan, and strongly advising the enterprise. Connected with the bishop by marriage as he was, his words carried no little weight, and in 1564 the governor of Paraguay set out, accompanied by Bishop Latorre, Felipe de Caceres, other officials and priests, three hundred Spaniards, and over a thousand Indians.

After overcoming the many difficulties that beset the journey across a practically unknown country, the expedition arrived in the neighbourhood of Santa Cruz. Here Nuflo de Chaves was awaiting the advent of the distinguished company: his welcome, however, was of a kind utterly unsuspected by the travellers. It was not until Vergara found himself a close prisoner in the hands of the rival governor that the unfortunate pilgrim became alive to the spider-like web that had enmeshed him. Nuflo de Chaves himself, content with his capture, left Vergara in the charge of his lieutenant, Hernando de Salazar, while he went off in supreme unconcern with a small army to chastise some rebellious native tribes.

In this instance Chaves undoubtedly suffered from an undue sense of confidence. Vergara, though a captive, was not altogether without resources. He succeeded, at all events, in sending a message through to Peru, explaining his evil case, and the treachery of the governor of the new province. The authorities

sent back word ordering his immediate release. In consequence of this he was set at liberty, notwithstanding the opposition of Salazar, and, continuing his journey, laid his grievances and the original purpose of his journey before the high authorities.

The ending of his strenuous wayfaring, however, was destined to give little satisfaction to the unfortunate Vergara. The early history of the River Plate abounds in instances that prove the necessity of a governor's continuous presence within his province. It was seldom indeed that an itinerant ruler—if he succeeded in returning at all—found on his homecoming matters in the same state as he had left them. Vergara, for one, discovered this to his cost. No sooner had he turned his back upon Paraguay than a host of claimants to the governorship rose up. Of these by far the most formidable was Juan Ortiz de Zárate, who offered to spend large private sums upon the welfare of the province were its government confided to him.

Thus Vergara, having overcome one series of troubles, found other and equally weighty vexations awaiting him on his arrival. For a while the authorities at Lima hesitated in the face of the appeals of the various claimants. In the end Zárate's financial guarantees won him the day. He was named governor. But the authorities added to their decision a cautious stipulation that he should proceed to Spain in order to obtain the ratification of his post from the king himself. As for the

ill-fated Vergara, he was advised in a non-committal fashion to undertake a similar journey and to lodge his appeal in the hands of the same royal personage. In view of the fact that the decision of the colonial authorities had gone against Vergara, the suggestion must have savoured just a little of irony.

Ortiz de Zárate, the successful claimant, started in haste upon his voyage to Spain. Ere his departure he delegated his authority for the time being to Felipe de Caceres, a former official of Vergara's, who had turned against his old chief in order to ally himself with the winning side.

Caceres, accompanied amongst others by Bishop Latorre and by Juan de Garay, a nephew of Zárate's, set out upon the return journey to Paraguay. They had reckoned, however, without Nuflo de Chaves, who was lying after the fashion of an astute tiger across the homeward road. The fierce intriguer must have chuckled grimly to himself when he learned that the officials of the coveted province were again about to place themselves within his power. Now grown reckless of any authority, however high, he was more than ever determined to possess himself of the governorship of Paraguay.

When the expedition drew conveniently near, Chaves started from Santa Cruz with a strong force to meet it. His ostensible object was the courteous escorting of the travellers through his dominions. His real aim, of course, was the capture of the chiefs and the possession of their province at any cost. It

was certainly through no fault of Nuflo de Chaves that the members of the travelling party returned in safety to their own country. The two forces had already effected a junction, and the trap was about to close upon Caceres when fate intervened. The insurrection of some Indians in the neighbourhood roused the warlike ardour of Irala's old lieutenant to the exclusion of all else. Postponing for the moment the execution of his plot against Caceres, he hastily left the main body, accompanied by no more than twelve men. The act was worthy of the reckless warrior; but the daring sally was brought to a tragic end. Reaching an Indian village whose inhabitants professed friendship, the leader laid himself in a hammock to rest. It was his last repose on earth, for an Indian chief, approaching stealthily, slew him with a blow from a club. Immediately afterwards the remaining members of the party were massacred, with the exception of a trumpeter, who saved himself on horseback to bear the news of the disaster.

Thus perished Nuflo de Chaves, one of the most daring and reckless soldier-adventurers that the strenuous early history of the River Plate can produce. Had he lived, there is no doubt that the immediate sequel of events would have been unrolled in a different, and even more exciting, fashion. As it was, Caceres and the bishop continued their journey in peace, and arrived safely in Asuncion—a feat for which they had to thank the death of Chaves alone.

Once arrived in Asuncion, however, tranquillity

was shortlived. Although he had consented to accompany the provisional governor, Bishop Latorre was actuated by no sentiment of friendship towards Caceres. In his heart the ecclesiastic had not forgiven the layman for his treacherous conduct towards his old leader, Vergara. Latorre's contempt demonstrated itself in actions that led to a breach between the spiritual and temporal power. The struggle rapidly grew in virulence. The clergy thundered against the provincial governor from the pulpit; Caceres retaliated by imprisoning the clergy. After this the bishop formally excommunicated his enemy, and the latter responded by expelling the whole company of priests from the cathedral and by closing the sacred edifice.

Presently Caceres committed the tactical error common to the period. In order to make arrangements for the transmission to Spain of one of his ecclesiastical prisoners, the vicar-general Alonso de Segovia, he proceeded beyond the borders of the central jurisdiction. His absence afforded the opposition the chance of organising its forces. Partizans of the banished Vergara joined hands with the clergy, and on his return Caceres was surprised, captured, and imprisoned in the house of his triumphant enemy, Bishop Latorre.

On the conclusion of these events an expedition prepared itself to set out for Spain, headed by Bishop Latorre with Caceres as a prisoner in his charge, while Martin Suárez Toledo was proclaimed temporary

governor. At the same time that the bishop's party left, another expedition under Juan de Garay sailed down the river. The objects of this latter, having no controversial origin, were practical and praiseworthy. Thus in July of 1573 Garay founded the city of Santa Fé, and remained on the spot, civilising the district, until he received news of the return from Spain of his uncle, Ortiz de Zárate.

Zárate's voyage to the Peninsula had been successful in its main issue, since the king had confirmed the *conquistador's* appointment as governor of Paraguay. Zárate had sailed on the return journey with a fleet of six ships containing six hundred men, a formidable reinforcement for the colony. But the voyage had been disastrous. Half the force had perished on the way, and the demoralised remnant found itself fiercely attacked by the Indians on its arrival at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata. Having suffered eighty further casualities, the harassed and diminished force took refuge in the Island of Martin Garcia. Juan de Garay, in the meanwhile, hearing of his uncle's plight, came down from Santa Fé after leaving the place in a state of defence, and relieved the worn European party after a sanguinary victory over the Indians.

After this the joint forces returned to Asuncion, where Zárate took up the reins of office, and became a severe and unloved ruler. His years of power were few enough, for he died in 1576. His will was curious and characteristic of the times. By this

Garay was made his executor and Diego Mendieta temporary governor. So far as the eventual and permanent governorship was concerned, this was to go to him who might marry Juana, Zárate's daughter by Leonor Yupanki, a descendant of the Inca Atahualpa.

Zárate's choice of a temporary governor proved an unfortunate one. Profligate, tyrannical, and utterly incapable of ruling, the career of Mendieta was dramatic but short. After a series of outrageous acts he was arrested and sent as a prisoner to Spain. The unruly temperament of the deposed governor could not restrain itself even upon the vessel. So unpopular did Mendieta become upon the homeward voyage that the sailors were goaded into teaching him a drastic, and final, lesson. To this end the hapless profligate was marooned upon the coast of Brazil, where the savages immediately slew him.

In the meanwhile Garay had proceeded to Chuquisaca, where resided Doña Juana de Zárate, in order to give effect to the terms of his uncle's will. The viceroy of Peru had already destined the hand of this very important lady for one of his own favourites; but Doña Juana had her own views on the subject of matrimony, and in these she was upheld by her cousin. So the heiress married Juan Torres de Vera y Aragón, and immediately after the ceremony the man of her choice handed over his functions as governor of Paraguay to Juan de Garay.

Garay had already proved himself a brave commander. His advent to power revealed his ability

as a governor. Beneath his rule matters became as comparatively tranquil as they had been in the days of Irala. Garay, moreover, possessed the qualities of a statesman as well as those of a leader of men. Long convinced as he had been of the strategic and commercial importance of the territories at the mouth of the River Plate, he delayed not in putting into execution a plan that had been maturing for years within his mind. With a small but efficient force he descended the river, beating off the attacks of the fierce southern Indians as he went, until in the month of June 1580 he came to the spot where the city of Pedro de Mendoza had once stood.

Upon the site of the abandoned settlement Garay established a new town—a city that was destined to remain, and to grow bit by bit until it had assumed the stately proportions of the present Buenos Aires, the capital of the land, and the largest city in South America. It was with this city as a mainspring that the nation of Argentina took root and flourished.

Such was the foundation of Buenos Aires. It cannot be said, however, that the inauguration of the southern city portended a more peaceful era for the new colonies in general. Its founder himself shortly afterwards, meeting with the fate that attended so many of the *conquistadores*, was murdered on the banks of the river by Indians. The death of the able governor was the signal for the outbreak of fresh struggles and confusion at Asuncion. Indeed,

the note of war is seldom absent from the early history of the provinces. As is natural enough, the stress of the age is responsible for some brilliant men and names.

Taking a rapid run through the centuries, we have Hernando Arias de Saavedra, familiarly known as Hernandarias, the first colonial-born governor of the province, a mighty man of valour who, amongst innumerable similar feats, vanquished a giant Indian warrior in single combat, with the Spanish and native armies standing by as spectators. The career of Hernandarias, like that of his contemporaries, was chequered, and his rule intermittent. Yet he deserves a brilliant niche in Argentine history. One of its chief heroes, he was even greater in peace than in war, and his humanity and zeal for culture and for the welfare of the Indians were productive of important results.

The history of the land after this shows steady progress, notwithstanding the discouraging attitude of the *Madre Patria*, the strife between clergy and laymen, the periodical Indian risings, and the efforts that from time to time were necessary to repel the aggressions of the Portuguese forces in Brazil. In the latter respect the names of Zabala, Cevallos, and Vertiz are particularly prominent. But the mere outline of the greater happenings during the Argentine colonial era would require more than a volume to itself, and no space remains here for such an ambitious attempt.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIBERATION OF ARGENTINA

THE twenty-fifth of May 1810 is held by the Argentines as the supreme date in the history of their land. On that day the heads of the patriotic and national movement united in Buenos Aires to receive the resignation of Don Baltasar Hidalgo de Cisneros, the last Spanish viceroy to wield authority over the provinces of the River Plate. The principal plaza of the town was thronged with an immense multitude. Decked out in the blue and white favours borrowed from the colours of the regiment of patriots, the exultant crowd burst into thunders of applause at the news of the completion of the act.

The moment was worthy of all the emotion spent on it, since from then stood alone for the first time the nation that has waxed and developed until it has become the Argentina of to-day. The twenty-fifth of May marked the snapping of the ties that had bound it to the *Madre Patria*.

The severance, however, was conducted in no light-hearted manner or mere spirit of impulse. When Belgrano, Saavedra, Morena, Alberto, and their colleagues of the first national government

took up the reins of power that had slipped from the nerveless hands of the last viceroy, the onus of the new authority, though resolutely assumed, came not untinged with sorrow. Although it possessed sufficiently small reason for gratitude towards the mother country, the colony's deep-seated affection for Spain had remained firm and unwavering throughout. Even when the time came for the inevitable parting, the necessity for separation was denied by many in the new country and striven against. That it existed became clear enough later. For an explanation of the national movement, however, a rapid historical survey is essential.

From the very beginning Argentina had been wont to stand in the relation of step-child to the mother country. For a couple of centuries her slighted pastoral territories were made to serve as little beyond convenient highways to Chile and gold-bearing Peru. Retained, quite against the natural order of affairs, in her status of an inferior colony, she was kept at the beck and call of the western and northern viceroyalties, and forced to submit to the chance whims of the senior provinces. As the interests of the high officials, moreover, were strictly confined to their own boundaries, it may be imagined that the welfare of Argentina suffered not a little at their hands. To her own national relatives she owed no goodwill whatever. If her trade, crippled by restrictions and unfavourable regulations, persisted at all in its stifled condition, it was not

because of the existence of her sister colonies and of Spain, but in spite of them.

It was not until 1776 that, it being impossible longer to deny the rightful claims of the colony, the provinces of the River Plate were at length exalted to the rank of viceroyalty, and thus at all events rendered independent of their neighbours. Amongst other things, the result was immediately evident in Argentina's commerce. Under an able first viceroy, Don Pedro de Cevallos, the trade of the colony expanded in a marvellously rapid fashion, and for the first time in the history of the country the national imports were permitted direct access to Buenos Aires without having previously been subjected to the artificial and profitable control of the senior provinces. So far as Spain was concerned, the irksome regulations still remained in force; but this latter stage, at all events, represented a distinct advance upon the previous era.

The next colonial episode of vital importance occurred during the period of the Napoleonic wars. Spain's consent to a financial subsidy of France was considered an act of hostility by Great Britain. In consequence of this, amongst other operations, a British expedition under General Beresford was sent in 1806 to capture Buenos Aires, and a second, and more powerful, force under General Whitelock was sent southwards in 1807 with the same object. Both had counted to a certain extent upon the co-operation of dissatisfied Argentines; but this

was not forthcoming, and both expeditions met with complete disaster. These Argentine victories were far more important and far-reaching in their effects than was suspected at the time, since they taught the colonists the extent of their power—a lesson that stood them in good stead a few years later.

Very shortly after this Spain lay in chaos beneath the iron heel of Napoleon. The abdication of its rightful sovereign, the assumption of the throne by Joseph Bonaparte, and the formation of a National Spanish Junta in opposition to the foreigner—the news of all this filtered slowly southwards to Argentina, neglected and commercially almost destitute. Both Napoleon and the Junta sent an envoy to the colony of the River Plate. The former was sent packing almost as soon as he had set foot on shore, whereas the claims of the representative of the Junta of Seville were considered with grave deliberations and doubts.

Indeed, it was a difficult and almost impossible matter to discover where the actual European authority lay. Between Spanish king, Joseph Bonaparte, and the Junta of Seville lay the devil and the deep sea. The answer of the Argentines seems to have been the only conclusive and reasonable one. The authority lay with themselves! Although the first national movement was sternly and savagely suppressed, the idea, having once taken root, never wavered in the minds of the patriots.

It is not a little remarkable that the war of

independence, though fiercely contested and hardly won, was accompanied by a very small degree of actual national hostility. The main questions involved were of expediency alone. To the Argentine the struggle was inevitable, and he entered upon the only course that appeared open to him with the reluctance that an unbroken sense of affection for the motherland involved. The spirit of bitterness bred by the active strife was of an unusually fleeting order, as is evident enough from the tone of the historians of both nations.

Thus, on the twenty-fifth of May 1810, Argentina became a nation. Her freedom, however, was not finally won without prolonged and bitter struggles. At her very doors, Córdoba, Uruguay, and Paraguay broke out into violent opposition to the new order of affairs, while the proud viceroyalty of Peru moved her armies against the troops of the patriots. These latter, under Generals Balcarce, Belgrano, and Ocampo, fought devotedly for their cause, and the tide of war ebbed and flowed in furious indecision.

On the ninth of March 1812, arrived in Buenos Aires the great Argentine hero, San Martin. Taken from his native land at the early age of six, he had studied at the College of Nobles in Madrid, and, later, had borne his share in the Peninsular War, taking part in the battles of Bailen and Albuera. At the call of his native country he came, voyaging in the British frigate *George Canning*, and accompanied by two others, Alvear and Zapiola,

whose names also were destined to become famous in the history of their land.

San Martin threw himself heart and soul into the work of liberation, not contenting himself with the vanguard of actual battle alone, but planning, recruiting, and organising with a marvellous and ceaseless activity. In his labours he was faithfully seconded by all the above-mentioned patriot generals, and by Pueyrredón, Rivadavia, and many others. For years the fruits of the campaign were barren enough. Spain, freed at length from Napoleonic oppression, was at liberty to turn more active attention to the War of Independence in the far south. It was only by added resolution that the increased Royalist armies were held in check.

At last came the supremely dramatic moment of the struggle. It was not until 1817 that San Martin, his patient and elaborate plans completed, was ready to strike in turn. The blow, when it fell, was utterly unexpected, completely paralysing. With four thousand men San Martin forced his way sheer across the tremendous precipices and abysses of the Andes, fell upon the Royalists in Chile, and inflicted a crushing defeat, aided by his lieutenants Soler and O'Higgins. This signalled the beginning of the end. Three years later San Martin swept northwards into Peru itself, while Lord Cochrane's vessels bombarded the coastal defences, and at his advent the fetters of centuries fell from the senior viceroyalty.

It was shortly after this that occurred the historic meeting between the Argentine leader and Bolivar, the liberator of the north. The feats of the latter had almost equalled those of San Martin, but his thirst for an emptier glory was infinitely greater. At the meeting of the pair the danger of jealousy and rupture became immediately evident to the Argentine general—a breach that might cause incalculable harm to the newly freed continent. Not for one instant did he hesitate. His work was done. For him the reward lay in that fact alone. He quietly crossed the continent, and from Buenos Aires sailed for Europe, to end his days in peaceful seclusion in France. In this year of the centenary of the Republic, Argentina is ringing with the deeds of its hero. But never was San Martin so truly great as when, at the very culminating point of his glory, he voluntarily drew about him the curtain of oblivion and passed from the scenes of his victories—for the sake of peace!

CHAPTER V

ARGENTINA OF TO-DAY

Progress of the Country—Recent Development—Condition of the ' Camp '—Land Values—Agricultural Strides—Stability of the Country—Prospects of the Future—A Study of Influences—The Forces of Climate, Commerce, and Politics—Argentine Government—Some Suppositions and Facts—Law and Order—The Prosperity of the People—Opportunities of Advancement—The Capitalist and the Land—Ownership of the Soil—Old-standing Colonisation—Estates and their Magnitude—Argentina's Liberty—A Fortunate Land—Some Ethics of Colonisation—The Attitude of the Resident Foreigner—Prompt Patriotism.

ARGENTINA in the year of the centenary of her Republic presents a study in development that the history of few nations can rival. Little more than a decade has passed since the future of Argentina lay heavily upon the minds of those whose interests centred within the frontiers of the great Republic. The question then was one of bankruptcy or salvation—a query frequently answered with a pessimistic emphasis on the former state. In the present circumstances it is difficult to realise that so short a period has elapsed since the days of crisis. Nevertheless, although the vital question itself has now been happily solved, numerous doubts remain.

Unconcerned with the primary situation, they now deal with prosperity alone, with the limitations and possibilities of a fortunate era—a problem that appears as difficult of solution as was the first.

Surveying the country once more from the now regal city upon the banks of the La Plata, it is impossible to speak otherwise than with a confidence in the future that need not necessarily border in the least upon undue optimism. Five years ago, when last I saw it, Argentina was in the first full flush of prosperity. The land was yielding its rich harvest, and bearing its good live-stock ; the railways were crying out for more engines and more wagons. The docks were filled with shipping to the point of overflowing, and the new Buenos Aires had arisen, and stood as a proud monument of the new age. After centuries of waiting Argentina had come into its own. There were many, it is true, who, mistrusting prosperity through lengthy intercourse with misfortune, branded the moment as the utmost height of success, and ephemeral at that. With what reason the progress of the past few years has sufficiently shown.

During no other period, probably, has the general advance proved so marked or so swift. The frontiers of pasturage and agriculture have been widely extended to the north, south, and west. Closely following this extension, the railways have flung out fresh tentacles to draw home the resultant increase of crops. In the north and south the progress, of

course, has been especially evident, since in both these directions lands have been pressed into service whose full utility was quite unsuspected a dozen years ago. Thus, in the north factories have been established in the midst of the quebracho forests, by means of which the famous tannin is now extracted from the wood on the spot, while both here in the Chaco and in Corrientes great tracts of hitherto comparatively useless ' camp ' are now efficiently served by railways. The province of Entre Rios, moreover, is now linked with its neighbours by means of the great steam ferry that carries both train and passengers from one bank of the river to the other. The far south has a similar story to tell. Sheep-farming has made extraordinarily rapid strides in Rio Negro, Chubut, and Santa Cruz, and although so far only a tithe of the available land has been laid under contribution, the operations there are already of sufficient importance to influence the general welfare of the country.

So much for the areas whose utility has been added to the general resources of the Republic during the past few years. There yet remains to be considered the condition of the ' Inner Camp,' the central lands of old standing, as it were, that have already yielded their wheat, alfalfa, maize, and linseed, and have nourished their cattle and sheep for years. Although the evidence of progress is necessarily far less marked here, the actual advance is nevertheless almost equally important. Furnished with a greatly

increased number of windmill pumps and general agricultural appliances, with paddocks more completely fenced, and with a quality of stock that ranks even higher than before, little has been left undone to improve the commercial position of these estancias.

Indeed, the evidence of the prosperity of the moment is overwhelming. Yet the question still arises as to whether the present success is destined to be permanent—that is to say, permanent in its full measure. On this point opinion is by no means so undivided. Its expression may briefly be said to be thus distributed—those sufficiently fortunate to have bought and sold land with an accruing profit some half-dozen times in succession are naturally inclined to an optimistic view of the future; while those who have been content to stand on one side and to watch the operations of the rest are inclined to believe that the limit of value in land has already been reached. As to the newcomers with capital to invest, who are now arriving in considerable numbers, they are naturally swayed by the hopes and fears of either faction.

It is certain that the history of the world can show no country in which mere negotiation of land has been attended by an unbroken succession of profit. The question is, of course, whether the land has actually now reached its rational economic value. It is quite possible that in the case of many of the 'inner camps' this condition of affairs is actually being approached—after all, he would be

a rash man who would assert that it had already been reached. But the 'inner camp,' it must be remembered, constitutes only a small percentage of the Argentine pastoral and agricultural lands. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that those 'camps' which lie without the central area are being held and worked under conditions that favour their owners to an altogether exceptional degree. When it is possible to cover half the cost price of a farm by means of a successful harvest, there can surely be no question as to whether the land is cheap or otherwise. This percentage of gain, of course, must not be taken as normal. Yet, so far from being phenomenal, there are many instances in which this proportion of profit has been exceeded.

In considering the present prosperity of Argentina it is necessary to remember that success has been brought about not by undue speculation of the 'wild-cat' order, but has been wrung from the land by means of unsparing labour. From the Italian immigrant—who pays his rent by a tithe of his produce, and who, though he is content with a mud hut for his first home, is wont to thrive amazingly—upwards to the large estanciero with his leagues of land and his many thousands of cattle, all have worked together to evolve the present situation from the actual fruits of the soil. Indeed, a proof that the progress has been no artificial one may be found in the fact that elements have not been lacking that would undoubtedly have wrecked a less substantial

prosperity. The winged terror—not the aeroplane, but the locust—has been busy; besides this, a lengthy drought has lately been experienced.

It might appear strange that neither of these calamities has disturbed Argentine equanimity more seriously than has been the case. Neither, however, is a new thing; each has been contended against for generations. Locusts, for all their myriads, are not sufficient in themselves to retard the agricultural march of the Republic. They are wont to cause an outcry, it is true, and one that arises from only too genuine a cause on the part of the sufferers. But the complete devastation that signals their advent is strictly local, and in a bad year as regards the visitation the damage effected has seldom exceeded ten per cent. of the entire crops. The possibilities of drought are more unpleasant to contemplate; but, with the country in its present position, it is difficult to understand how anything short of a phenomenal series of rainless seasons could seriously affect the financial stability of the community.

It is impossible that the new-comer and the resident of old standing should alike fail to be struck by the evidence of this fortunate state of things. It is no empty compliment to say that civilisation and modern thought have marched hand in hand with the forward financial career of the nation. Law and order—empty catchwords in the past—have now been secured as firmly as is possible to man. National institutions, works, and monuments

SNOW PLOUGH AT WORK IN THE CORDILLERAS

abound, while education is yearly becoming more systematic and thorough. Young Argentina, moreover, has now taken seriously to sport, with a marked improvement in the racial physique as a consequence. Football has come to take its place as the national game; boating, golf, tennis, and other similar recreations are now altogether in vogue. To go further afield, even the Gaucho, in the remotest 'camps' of all, is becoming slowly but surely moulded by the spirit of the age. As the arm of the law has lengthened, the size of his knife-blade has been curtailed in proportion, and the opportunities for an unpunished revengeful thrust are approaching a safe *minimum.*

But it is not in the 'camp' that the newcomer must look for the chief evidence of the national fortune. Of that Buenos Aires stands as a monument not likely to be surpassed. It has been laid at the door of the city with its million and a quarter of inhabitants that it has arrogated to itself an importance that is out of proportion to the population of the Republic as a whole. The charge is undoubtedly a genuine one. Yet one would not have the capital otherwise than it is. With its boulevards and palatial public buildings, its plazas and parks, its motor-cars, tramways, and the whirl of its general traffic, Buenos Aires causes the newcomer to open his eyes in wonder. It is possible that he had been warned to expect much from the great southern city. Yet with the first actual glimpse of the main streets

comes the inevitable moment of surprise—the capital may be trusted to see to that!

There are more and larger ships both within the long line of docks and waiting without upon the yellow La Plata river. Royal Mail Packets that carry the millionaire and the humble Basque, Italian steamers filled with emigrants from the Mediterranean shore, and innumerable vessels of all nationalities—they lie closely now, stem to stern, alongside the great wharves. And as these latter, as well as the residences both in main town and suburbs, have their origin, both actual and financial, in the rich soil of the land, there is surely no reason why their numbers should not continue to expand and to flourish.

To return to a fuller elaboration of the possibilities of the future. The profession of a prophet is overcrowded. For one reason, the art is more remunerative now than formerly, as is testified to by the careers of the forecasters of weather and of winning horses. Unfortunately, a certain amount of responsibility still remains with the amateur, and the aftermath of mistaken prognostications is apt to recoil with crushing weight upon his head. On those occasions, therefore, where surmise concerning the future has not been fruitful in error, there is a certain amount of excuse, although no justification, for the imitation of the advertising methods of the tipster who shrieks in print: 'I told you so!'

Some five years ago in 'Modern Argentina'

I ventured to predict a rise in the price of Argentine land. Astonishingly little brilliance can be claimed for the idea, since it was obvious enough that the price of the soil was far beneath that of those other countries whose industries enter into competition with those of the Republic. It is true that at the time opinions were as conflicting as they ever must be on the subject. Curiously enough, there were many in whom pessimism had become ingrained by the actual force of long residence in the country and wide experience of its peculiarities. For so many years had they been accustomed to low values in land that the beginning of the new era not unnaturally occurred to them as an ephemeral and dangerous thing.

It seems that there are disadvantages to an acquaintance with a country, however intimate, if only from within. In fact, 'what knows he of Argentina who only Argentina knows?' Convictions were formed quite irrespective of what was occurring in other countries. In the minds of those to whom the price of thirty shillings or a couple of pounds an acre already appeared exorbitant, anything beyond this necessarily entered into the region of wild speculation.

In the meanwhile the cost of Argentine land has risen by leaps and bounds, until in many instances it has attained a value some three or four hundred per cent. in excess of that which prevailed five years ago. Thus the commercial ethics of agriculture have

entered upon a new stage, and the disputes of the optimists and pessimists have broken out afresh on a more lofty rung of the ladder of values. The majority, it is true, are convinced that the commercial life of the land is yet in its very early maturity; there are others who go to the lengths of asserting that a financial crisis is already in sight.

Before entering into details, it would be as well to deal with the main question. What are the influences that may reasonably be brought into existence to arrest the progress of Argentina, or even to alter the advance into a retrograde march? Broadly speaking, such, of course, can only come under three headings—natural, commercial, and political.

The natural causes are immediately obvious. Drought, floods, disease, and other phenomena fatal to live-stock and crops constitute the ever present perils of an agricultural land. Indeed, in a computation of its resources, it is surely wise to deduct a certain proportion with these in view, and thus in a sense insure against the uncomfortable possibilities. So far as these contingencies themselves are likely to affect Argentina, it is as well to consider one by one the possible results.

With the phenomenon of drought Argentina has now become familiarised at intervals for centuries; therefore it is only fair to suppose that the worst possibilities of such rainless seasons have by now been accurately gauged. As a matter of fact, the climate of the pastoral and agricultural regions of

the Republic is not one in which exceptional and fatal spells of drought may be looked for. Throughout even the old colonial period there is no record of a rainless spell ending in total calamity, such as has been known in the history of less fortunately situated pastoral nations, although mention is frequently made of rainless times. It must be remembered, moreover, that in those days the saving methods of pumps and wells were unknown, and that irrigation was in its earliest infancy as well as restricted to an insignificant area. So far as the present is concerned, it so happens that the past two years have been quite unusually deficient in rain, in spite of which the progress of the country has continued with but little check.

With floods the wide, open stretches of the main *campo* are entirely unconcerned, and even upon the banks of the great rivers the periodical inundations have little effect upon the actual pasture and agriculture. With the possibilities of the locust I have already dealt; thus—in the absence of larger-bodied plagues—disease amongst the live-stock is the sole remaining contingency. As regards this, the outlook is distinctly hopeful. Although an outbreak may occur from time to time, in view of the highly scientific methods now employed, it is surely not unreasonable to expect a continuance of a healthful condition that is normal in a climate as temperate as that of Argentina.

The second broad heading, that of the commercial

influences, may be dealt with very briefly. Putting aside such questions as inflated values and mercantile panic, which are results rather than causes, Argentina's chief exports—meat, grain, and wool—are not only necessaries, but articles for which the world's demand is slowly but surely gaining upon the supply.

The remaining influence, the political, is worthy of lengthier consideration. In Europe, by dint of lengthy habit and hearsay, the topic of Argentine instability bade fair to become as stable as is now the status of the Republic itself. Illusions as to daily revolutions and weekly wars die hard in the minds of those to whom the whole continent of South America represents a single neighbourhood populated by folk of identical tastes and passions—a sort of Tom-Tiddler's ground of sparkling eyes, knife-flashes, gunshots, and boa-constrictors. In Argentina such things are to be met with, it is true—in strict moderation. There may still be countries where, as according to the more exotically-minded novelist, the daring and intrepid adventurer has merely to land with an armed boat's crew in order to occupy the presidential chair. But these, I think, are to be looked for at some distance north of Argentina.

Even at the expense of the glamour of wounds and strife, it is high time that the last of these illusions should disappear. Excellently policed, endowed with a generous constitution, and with a government

that has proved itself sympathetic towards enterprise, Argentina is fully as much a land of law and order as is England, France, or Germany. Nations no more than individuals can foresee their future. Revolutions, whether popular or legislative, are the occasional lot of all. Yet it is surely the mind of the wealthy citizen that turns last of all to thoughts of social and political upheaval. And the Argentine citizen is very wealthy indeed. Not only has he much to lose; but, now that his nation has found itself and his way is clear, he is imbued with a high order of practical patriotism as well.

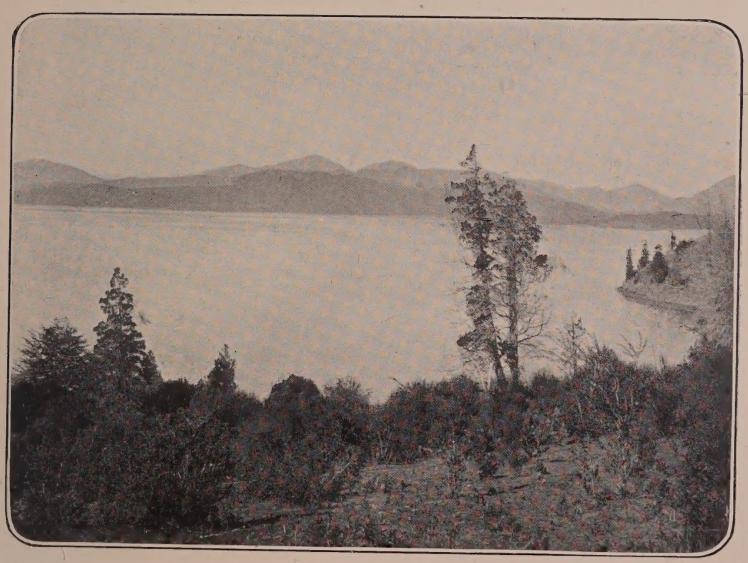
The mental condition of the Argentine mind cannot well fail to be contented under existing circumstances. This is undoubtedly so, not only in the case of the more highly placed, but in that of the populace as well. Strikes occur from time to time, it is true; but the points at issue are seldom grave in a land where the demand for labour exceeds the supply. Indeed, the situation of the people calls to mind a factor in the present state of affairs that is worthy of note. Amongst the immigrants from Europe there have recently arrived a certain number of Anarchists. A bomb outrage on the part of one of their number resulted last year in the death of Colonel Falcon, the chief of police at Buenos Aires. Fears concerning trouble in the future have been expressed by one of the few English writers on Argentina who has taken the trouble to see the country thoroughly for himself, and for whose

opinion I have a great respect. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the possibility of any such danger is extremely remote. The sting of anarchy surely cannot fail to atrophy in the free atmosphere of Argentina. The police force, moreover, is never overbearing; but, when it strikes, the blow is wont to tell with uncommon force. The murderer's fellow-Anarchists in Buenos Aires have already learned this lesson to their cost, as their wholesale uprooting and expulsion will witness.

But, compared with the great issues at stake, the matter is trivial, a flea-bite, in fact, to the weighty destinies of Argentina. So far as class hatred is concerned, in no country is there less evidence of this; very probably for the simple reason that in no other land has the working man greater opportunities of advancement. Indeed, to paraphrase, it might be said that there is a millionaire's cheque-book in every artisan's tool-bag.

There are probably few countries in the world that have offered so favourable a field for the operations of the capitalist as Argentina. So far as all-round progress is concerned, Canada almost alone can probably compare its forward strides with those of the Republic. The respective lines of advance, however, have differed widely. Whereas the new lands of the dominion have been for the most part leased directly from the government, those of Argentina have more generally been purchased in very large blocks by capitalists,

PIONEERING IN THE SOUTH



LAKE NAHUEL HUAPI

and subsequently worked or leased at the option of the owner.

The explanation of this is a simple one. With the exception of the forest country in the far north and the districts in the neighbourhood of Santa Cruz to the south, the greater part of the Argentine land, however sparsely populated, has known private ownership for centuries. Almost from the inception of the Spanish colonial era a system of land concession was inaugurated that continued until remarkably little territory remained unaccounted for. It is true that in the first instance the nominal owners were, from one cause or another, frequently unable even to approach, far less to control, the vast properties that were theirs by grant or inheritance.

Still, although some natural lapses occurred, concessions and title deeds held good for the most part. The Argentine system of land proprietorship is ancient compared with that of Canada. Thanks to its geographical position, the tide of colonisation entered Argentina from three sides almost simultaneously. With the pioneer forces converging from north, west, and east, almost the *entire country*, with the exception of the districts already mentioned, was overrun, subdued, and largely parcelled out within fifty years from the date of the first settlement. It is important, therefore, to remember that the active colonisation of the Republic can claim a history of some three centuries and a half.

Except in the near neighbourhood of the large

cities, small holdings are rare in the extreme. The working farmer, speaking generally, is wont to rent his land, and, incidentally, to thrive remarkably from the process. At the same time the financial return to the landowner is satisfactory, since it seldom amounts to less than ten per cent. It is no doubt partly as a consequence of this that the general run of the estates remain large in area. It is true that the enormous and unwieldy private properties of a past age, amounting in many cases to hundreds of leagues, have become split up and divided. The Argentine law relating to succession and to the equal division amongst the heirs is sufficient in itself to account for this. Yet even here it is not unusual for the property to be retained as a re-unified asset by the formation of a private company in which the various interests of the heirs are merged; and, since the favourite investment of the Argentine is in the land of his own country, the periodical process of division is in any case counteracted by the continuous tendency of the properties to increase. The situation as regards these important holdings, moreover, has been accentuated by the action of public companies who have invested their capital largely in the soil.

One of the great merits attaching to the Argentine rule is the absolute freedom which its government extends to all. Liberty is no catchword here. A hundred years of cultivation has made the pleasant state part of the very atmosphere and soil. To such

a degree, indeed, that its benefits are accepted with the silence that implies a matter of course. It is in the more autocratic republics that the word is used to conjure with, so far as anything can be conjured from nothing, except on the stage. But in such cases the word has its remunerative employments. It may be used as a cloak for executions of inconvenient people; it may be flung abroad generously as the precursor of a profitable revolution, or it may serve as a warrant for the extortion of fresh taxes. The history of some Central American republics—amongst other countries throughout the world—can produce a wealth of instances of the kind.

It is true that the flourishing of Argentine liberty has not continued unchecked during the course of the hundred years from which its inception dates. There have existed periods when the title of dictator cloaked a power of autocracy that was used and abused with the untrammelled licence of a medieval despot. Yet these spells of tyranny were no more lasting in their effects than a May frost in England, and the result of the hundred years' progress is the entire liberty of deed, speech, and thought that prevails at this day.

Indeed, it is a little difficult to dissociate freedom from the open, generous, sun-swept soil of the Republic. So long as eighty years ago Darwin, who was an observer of other things beyond evolution and nature, commented thus when in Argentina upon the political situation of the three southernmost

and greatest countries of the continent: 'It is impossible to doubt but that the extreme liberalism of these countries must ultimately lead to good results. The very general toleration of foreign religions, the regard paid to the means of education, the freedom of the press, the facilities offered to all foreigners, and especially, as I am bound to add, to everyone professing the humblest pretensions to science, should be recollected with gratitude by those who have visited Spanish America.'

There are few who will not concur heartily with this, and with even better reason, in the light of present-day affairs. The claims of the state upon private individuals are benevolently reasonable. Beyond the ordinary occasional civic duties that fall to the lot of every inhabitant of a civilised land, there exists only one call for the exercise of self-sacrifice on the part of the Argentine citizen—conscription for military service. Even this summons is held legitimate and honourable enough by the majority of nations, in whom the old-fashioned *dulce et decorum* theory still holds good.

The idea of conscription, it is true, occasionally represents a bugbear to the foreign residents, whose children, born in the Republic, become Argentine by law, and thus subject to the liabilities of the nation. There is a story told of a conversation between a prominent Argentine official and an English resident on this topic. The latter, who resented the law, informed the other that in due course he should

send his young son out of the country in order to avoid it. The Argentine shrugged his shoulders resignedly. 'It is a pity!' he confessed. 'In any case he could not be king of England, and now he will not even be president of Argentina!'

In such cases as these, however, reluctant parents need entertain no misgivings as to the attitude of their sons. Imbued with that curiously rapid patriotism that Argentine soil seems almost invariably to breed, they are as anxious to serve and to prove their citizenship to the full as ever was Romeo to take up permanent quarters on Juliet's balcony. The conglomeration of races that is building itself firmly about the nucleus of the old Spanish families is truly amazing. British, French, Italians, Germans, Austrians, Russians, Danes—these are only some of the nationalities involved. But, once in Argentina, it is the fashion to be Argentine. Surely no higher compliment can be paid to a country than this desire for adoption.

CHAPTER VI

THE ARGENTINE AT HOME

Some Argentine Characteristics—Physique—Predilection for Sport—Culture—Society and Hospitality—Argentine Ladies—Matters of Costume, Manners, and Morality—Accomplishments in Relation to Moderation—Social Strata—Absence of a Racial Question—The Argentine Army—Qualities of the Troops—Gallic Sympathies of the Nation—The French Fleet and Buenos Aires.

SINCE the elements that go to make up a nation are necessarily heterogeneous, the judging of the mass by the traits of a limited number of individuals is necessarily both arbitrary and dangerous. In almost every civilised country the habits of the various orders of society differ more widely between themselves than do the characteristics of the higher ranks of one nation from those of another. In the case of the Latin races, however, so far as actual manners and deportment are concerned, the range is narrower than in the majority of other folks, since the humblest person is apt to be endowed with courtly ways and with a pride altogether out of comparison with the size of his purse. So far as he is concerned, comparisons are futile. With the aristocracy and upper middle classes the matter is at all events more

practical and direct. It may be pleaded that the term aristocracy in connexion with a republic is technically incorrect : I employ it since the number of Argentines descended from the old Spanish families is very great—as would naturally be expected when it is remembered that the *conquistadores* themselves were for the greater part of noble origin, and that the later colonial concessions were almost invariably accorded, in compliance with the spirit of the age, to men of standing and influence.

The Argentine possesses a full share of those qualities that are wont to compel the respect of the Englishman. His air of coolness and reserve, his undoubted courage, and his genuine propensities for sport—these traits alone cause his companionship to be welcomed by Englishmen of his own standing, more especially in the *campo*, where the understanding between the two nationalities is far more intimate and complete than in the towns. That the nation is possessed of both chivalry and generosity has been amply proved in the past. Both in the struggle for liberation and in conflicts with neighbouring countries there are not a few instances where the Argentine, with the enemy in his power, has gladly accepted words of honour in the place of deeds —a magnanimity that in several instances cost the nation dear.

The national physique leaves nothing to be desired. The average Argentine is not only of good height and breadth, but of an athletic build as well.

For centuries, no doubt, the influences of climate and of an open-air life, principally in the saddle, has worked to this end. Another cause is to be looked for in the fact that the Argentine of the present day has now become accustomed to devote himself to general athletics with an admirable thoroughness. He is completely at home now in the ethics of golf, rowing, fencing, and lawn-tennis, in all of which he has become notably proficient. Athletic sports are common enough events, and, as for football, the goals and line-flags are scattered broadcast throughout the land. Indeed, to such an extent has football become the national game that future generations in the Republic will doubtless refuse to believe that the recreation ever possessed a previous home—much in the way of the German who was desirous of translating Shakespeare into the English tongue. In the matter of such sports the Argentine is still, perhaps, a trifle overkeen to win, and the consoling merits of an honourable defeat have yet to become clearer, but the true sporting instinct has become definitely awakened in him.

Although the standard of education in the Republic itself is now high, the great majority of youthful Argentines still proceed to Europe for their concluding studies. The linguistic propensities of the nation are, in consequence, well developed. A knowledge of French is universal, and it is satisfactory to note that the study of English is becoming more and more general. In literature notable

strides have recently been effected, and the translation of Argentine works will undoubtedly be more general in the future than in the past.

There is no lack of culture in Buenos Aires, although it must be admitted that the number of Englishmen who have lived in Argentina for years and who nevertheless remain totally ignorant of the true benefits of Argentine companionship proper is astonishingly large. To these the higher ranks of Argentine society appear to have inherited the rather formal and unbending methods of their Castilian ancestors. Yet towards one admitted to the intimacy of his family, the Argentine will reveal a geniality that contains nothing whatever of this alleged stiffness. Although the strangers seldom suspect the fact, his interests and knowledge are usually far wider in their scope than those of the newcomers to the country. His tastes, indeed, may even run to Bohemianism. There is a côterie in one of the fashionable suburbs of the capital that affords an admirable illustration of the broad-mindedness of the age. Headed by one of the most prominent deputies and his brother, the bearers of an historical name, the visitors at their houses comprise many of the really old Argentine families, whose members occupy high positions both in society and government. It is true that lawn-tennis, bridge, and the like are the ostensible objects that draw these free and easy gatherings to the houses of the Señores Calvo with their ever open doors. But

these pleasant amusements form only a part of the social interests of the circle. Literature, music, and art are not only discussed with fervour here, but practised with efficiency as well, in an atmosphere, moreover, that would attract lovers of the politer studies all the world over.

Although strictly temperate himself, the hospitality of the Argentine is peculiarly lavish, and is well worthy of the fame it enjoys. As may be imagined, the establishments of the very rich, not only in Buenos Aires, but in the *campo*, are sumptuous to a degree. Indeed, the landowner completely understands the art of living—as life is understood in the Riviera, Paris, and London.

The topic of the ladies is invariably to be approached with caution. Yet in the case of the Argentine fewer tremors than usual are necessary, since none has with reason ever denied the charms of the femininity here. With the upheaval of the ancient sex restrictions the woman of the Republic has come out into the world. Now one wonders what would be the fate of the public entertainments without her ubiquitous presence, her graceful movements, and her surprising success in matters of costume. In my previous book upon the country I have already endeavoured to picture her—a connoisseur in beauty and in her own relation to the phase, who will glide through life with a charm of a swan, whose voice falls a trifle below the quality of her other entertainments, and who, married, becomes

intensely domesticated and a devoted worshipper of her children.

Concerning the merits of the voice a later judgment has tended rather to alter my opinion; in moments of excitement the timbre inclines to the harsh, it is true; but in those of ordinary conversation the note is modulated to a degree. In one respect this woman of Argentina falls behind the times. Her name is almost inevitably free from scandal, whether in the press or divorce court! The creator of a serious gap both in journalism and in the salaries of judges, the Argentine wife is an inveterate student of the moralities, a spouse who makes a Caesar of every husband in the land. In the opinion of the majority this adds still more to her charm. By this I do not mean to infer that these ladies are superhuman: on the contrary, they are intensely feminine and eloquent of eye—yet the fact remains that they and the breath of scandal remain perfect strangers.

The Argentine woman is not addicted to public performance of any kind that takes a form in which she does not excel. This reluctance may savour a little of self-consciousness, yet it undoubtedly possesses its advantages. It saves unsuspecting guests, for instance, from those terrors of entertainment from which they are liable to suffer elsewhere. Here, the visitor, having acquired temporary slavery at the price of a meal, is not led out to listen with a smile when his heart revolts at the discordant

explosion of sounds that occasionally emanates from the alleged musician who is rich in self-confidence and in little beyond. On the contrary, the Argentine lady errs perhaps a shade too much on the side of safety and atmospheric peace. Indeed, should a hostess consent to perform upon any instrument, her guests may take it for granted that they are about to listen to something that is very well worth the hearing. Put it down to whatever motive you will, whether innate modesty or dread of failure—the difference between the two traits frequently exists only in name—such restraint is surely preferable to the amiable efforts of those who stamp through a skirt dance or trifle with weighty hands upon the piano keys in the sacred cause of recreation.

Argentina is fortunate in its freedom from any internal racial question. An infusion of African blood, such as has occurred in tropical Brazil, has never come into being here. The few cases where the blood of the native pampa warriors has entered into the composition of society afford a distinctly favourable result, and as regards appearance, the mark of the thin-lipped and comparatively fair-skinned people has become entirely merged in the European in the rare instances where it occurs. In Buenos Aires, in fact, no human feature exists that distinguishes the town in any way from London or Paris. I emphasise this for the benefit of those who may still picture the Argentine as strolling about costumed in feathers and a dagger!

There is the Gaucho, it is true. Nevertheless, that indispensable and most valuable human asset stands alone, and must not be confounded with any other branch of Argentine society. Not that the Gaucho suffers in any sense from social ostracism produced by racial contempt. On the contrary, he obtains all the respect that is the due of his virile and excellent qualities. It is his inborn contempt for townsmen and their ways—a contempt that, though perhaps less marked than in former times, is apparently as ineradicable as ever—that has kept this wiry breed of centaurs apart from the other strata of the Republic's inhabitants. The Gaucho will extend his full sympathy to his master, the Estanciero; but of this his 'camp' fellow, the immigrant agriculturalist, obtains not a particle. The society of the first is as remote from him as the stars from the earth; into that of the second he would not enter if he could. Therefore the true son of the 'camp' remains alone. Intermarriage on the part of some—of a more liberal and, from the 'camp' point of view, degenerate, stock—though it has diminished the number of stalwarts, has left the residue as intact as ever. So, although it is a little hard—since Argentina without him would not be Argentina—the Gaucho must be left out of all social consideration for the time being.

Failing the possibility of a more intimate acquaintance, a good impression of Argentine society at its best may be obtained from a visit to Palermo

racecourse, a jaunt to the Tigre river on a regatta day, an afternoon stroll along the Calle Florida, or a short stay at the seaside resort of Mar del Plata. In such cases, of course, it is possible to judge by appearances alone. Nevertheless, the social cream of Argentina well repays the study.

The Argentine military system as well as the uniforms are now, as in the case of the majority of South American republics, modelled upon the German pattern. From the point of view of smartness the appearance of both officers and men has vastly improved during the last decade, and they are now well adapted to take their place by the side of any other troops in the world. There is no doubt that the cavalry officers when they visited London in 1909 to take part in the military tournament made an exceedingly favourable impression, although the particular competitions in which they took part were almost new to them in the way of exercises. From his mere mode of life it follows that the Argentine of the Estanciero class should develop into an ideal light cavalryman. A lithe centaur—to employ the hackneyed and inevitable term—he has played the part since his childhood's days. As for the instincts of battle, the *campo* for centuries has witnessed too many pitched engagements and skirmishes for this not to be inbred to a full degree.

Although the Argentine, for practical purposes, takes the German for his model so far as the army

is concerned, the actual sympathy of the nation is perhaps more widely extended to the French than towards any other people. The national laws and institutions are closely allied with those of France. The wisdom of this is obvious enough, since the constitutions and temperaments of the two great republics resemble each other in many respects.

The personal popularity, moreover, that the French enjoy in Argentina may be gauged by the procedure on the occasion of an official visit of the Gallic representatives to the River Plate. During my last stay in the country, for instance, a French fleet came by invitation to rest under the shadow of Buenos Aires. The condition of the internal arrangements of the officers—from the admiral down to the youngest midshipman—must have been dubious by the time that their stay came to an end. Argentine hospitality is proverbial, and it was undoubtedly displayed then at the very top of its bent. The moment when the naval officers, escorted by a cheering crowd of many thousands—for the welcome was essentially popular as well as official—drove to the Plaza Hotel as guests of the nation, marked the inception of an era of festivity that flagged not for a moment during the stay. Beneath the stress of luncheons, dinners, receptions, and dances the appearance of the gallant sailors became just a little worn at the end; but they departed very full of content!

CHAPTER VII

THE MAGNET OF LABOUR

Varieties of Immigrant—Europe as a Feeding Ground—The Italian—Importance of the Influx—The Neapolitan compared with the Northerner—Italian Trade and Industry—Success of the Farmer—Thrift and its Reward—The Spaniard—His Occupations—Enterprising Harvesters—The Basque and his Dairy—English, French, and Germans—The Russian as a Newcomer—His Peculiarities and Status—Austrians and Scandinavians—The Ubiquitous Turk—A Strenuous Pedlar—His Journeys by Land and River—Relations of the Turk with his Competitors—A Local Opinion.

ARGENTINA, so far as her working population is concerned, is essentially a cosmopolitan nation. Indeed, the broad range of countries from which she has drawn her immigrants is in itself sufficient proof of the comprehensiveness of her territorial advantages. It is true that the incoming stream of humanity flows from Europe and from the other centres of the white races alone. The Asiatic has not been encouraged to enter the fertile realms of the Republic; nor has he so far shown himself disposed to attempt a labour crusade in the country. Curiously enough, the eastern line has been drawn at the European Turk, who is sufficiently akin to the actual Asiatic. Having carved out his own special

groove and career in the country, he is tolerated, but his popularity is the most precarious item of his existence, for all that.

Thus, including the itinerant Turk, it may be said that the whole of Europe has been laid under contribution to supply the Argentine labour market. From the Eastern Russian and the Pole to the Spaniard and Basque, from the Norwegian and Britisher to the Southern Italian—the appeal has been left unanswered by no European race. In degree, of course, the response has been very marked, since it is obvious that the call of the pampa is not received by all nations with the same amount of enthusiasm.

Taking the Argentine immigrants in the order of their numerical importance, the Italian claims a very easy first place. The inhabitant of the Peninsula has found a second home in both the urban and rural districts of Argentina. In his case success has bred familiarity—or familiarity has bred success—to a degree that is unknown to him in any other part of the world. Here, both the energetic northerner and the siesta-loving Neapolitan have been fortunate enough to light upon those paths of life to which their temperaments most eminently fit them. In the choice of their trades the wide distinctions between the characteristics of the pair are evident.

The Neapolitan, as may be imagined, plays the less strenuous part. Ere proceeding further

it may be as well to explain that in Argentina all Southern Italians are classed as Neapolitans, whether they actually hail from that state or not. The term serves well enough, in any case, and for the sake of simplicity I will employ it here.

The southerner, by choice a townsman, is wont to seek the capital or the larger cities and there to pursue the vocations of his own heart. The great boot-blacking shops, with their lofty benches upon which the customers sit in rows, their strident gramophones, and their lusty-voiced human advertisers at the door, are almost exclusively owned and served by the Neapolitan. He takes his place in the restaurant world both as proprietor and—far more generally—as waiter. He joins the ranks of the cab-drivers, carpenters, shopkeepers, and lottery ticket sellers, and fulfils efficiently enough the posts of railway guard and tram-conductor.

There are many degrees in the traditional lassitude of the Neapolitan temperament, and the more energetic render faithful service in stations of responsibility. As for the others—those that represent the type with which we are most familiar at home—they are here too. The noise of the piano organ rarely disturbs the Buenos Aires streets, it is true. But the ice-cream seller is there, exotically painted barrow and all! Under the shade of the palm or the acacia tree is ladled out the same material that brightens the lives and injures the interiors of London urchins. At least, it has the same

appearance, and, judging by the expression on the consumer's face, it possesses the same merciful chilliness that cloaks the actual quality of the compound.

The importance of the total Italian immigration may be judged from the fact that in numbers it equals, and in some years exceeds, that of all the other nations put together. And this in a country where the percentage of immigrants is very great.

The capitalist, lying without the scope of this article as he does, is not taken into consideration here. It is, nevertheless, a somewhat curious fact that, while England, France, Belgium, and Germany have introduced their millions of money into the country, Italy has brought labour alone. In the words of one of her own authors: Italy has provided the labour that was necessary to Argentina, and Argentina has given the bread of which the Italian was in want.

The labour that is here referred to, however, is decidedly that of the northerner rather than that of the Neapolitan. Indeed, the value of the former's services to the Republic is not to be overestimated. As agriculturalist, engineer, navvy, and builder, he has demonstrated qualities difficult to be surpassed. There is not a province whose soil does not turn beneath his plough, and in every corner where the new railway lines are eating their way into fresh country his pick, shovel, and drill are being plied with ceaseless activity.

The type of Italian that has effected all this is one of which we have known a few specimens in London,

but not many. His brother there, more rarely seen now, is the thick-set, stalwart man, who raises his huge pestle in his muscular arms to let it drop with a thud upon the freshly laid asphalte, and who continues the task with a quiet steadiness of purpose that is characteristic and admirable. It is easy to picture him in the midst of the vast land-ocean of the camp. His wants in the first instance have been few—had they been greater the spot would never have known his presence. A mud hut—erected in the simplest fashion by placing wet soil between boards until it has dried and hardened, when the boards are removed and the house remains—with a domed oven of the same material beside it, constitutes his first establishment. After a while other erections will take their place in the neighbourhood of the first. Mud and reed shanties will rise up for the shelter of animals and tools, but the family dwelling, unembellished, is likely to remain in its primitive state until the bank-book shows a balance that is strangely disproportionate in size to the home.

Once settled in this fashion upon his land, the Italian spares neither himself nor his family in his efforts to wring from it all the profit that it can be made to render. To this end he is up and astir while the early morning is yet grey and sunless. Callous of all but the midday heat, he will continue to guide his plough on occasions well into the hours of the night if the moonlight be sufficiently powerful to enable him to discern the furrows.

In the end half a square mile or so of land may be under cultivation, sown with the various seeds in preparation for the first harvest. Such efforts are deserving of success, and it must be admitted that it is not often that this fails the Italian. Indeed, three consecutive fortunate seasons will see him a made man. That is to say, he may be counted on to possess sufficient to keep him in modest comfort in his native Italian village for the rest of his days, or to buy land of his own in Argentina, and thus begin a more ambitious career.

The latter course, as a matter of fact, is pursued by astonishingly few. It may be that, having won success so rapidly by the means of tenancy alone, the majority are loth to burden their shoulders with the responsibilities and risks of actual ownership. So it is that, unwilling to play tricks with a fortune that to his simple mind is already beyond the dreams of avarice, the Italian packs up his few belongings, and, cash and all, departs to the vineyards and mountains of his own country. He is probably wise, since the intricate arts of management do not in the least coincide with the arduous toil of manual labour. As it is, he sits down in his village to assume a delightfully important rôle, and his example inspires a fresh batch of his countrymen to take ship and in turn try their luck in the far Southern Republic.

The Spaniard ranks next in importance to the Italian as an immigrant. As a class, his career is naturally far more difficult to follow, since, assimilating

himself so readily with his Argentine brethren, he becomes entirely at one with them, and takes a certain share in nearly all the crafts and trades in the country.

Although immigrants arrive from every part of Spain, the majority hail from Galicia. In the higher ranks of society there are many who have made their mark as bankers and merchants, and many have distinguished themselves in the professions; but it is not with such that we are dealing now. Of the ordinary Spanish immigrant there is one distinct class, however, that of the harvester, whose movements are characteristic and easily to be followed. In the same way as the Italian harvester—not to be confounded with the small tenant farmer—he is accustomed to leave Europe in time to assist in the Argentine harvest season and to return again when the work of the crops is ended, continuing the same process for year after year. Drawn by the ripening corn, maize, and linseed, he is to be found covering the steerage decks of the steamers in batches of a thousand or more at a time, his pockets empty on the outward voyage, his purse well filled on the return.

The Basque, although he helps to swell the ranks of the harvesters, too, has taken one industry as fully under his protection as has the Neapolitan that of boot-polishing. Dairy-farming has become almost entirely the monopoly of the Basque. Whether he assists the efforts of the cow in the fashion that is so

WHEAT PILES AT OCHANDIO STATION

often laid to the charge of the London milk-purveyor, I am unable to say, but it is certain enough that the majority of these dairy-farmers make a distinct financial success of their occupation.

So far as the English, French, and German immigrants are concerned, none of these call for any particular remark here, for the simple reason that the numbers of labourers and mechanics of these nationalities are quite insignificant. In the past the French have been responsible for no little immigration ; but from various causes the traffic has dwindled almost to the point of disappearance.

The Russian forms a comparatively new element in the tide of nations that flows down to the River Plate. Indeed, it is only within the last ten years that his advent has been conspicuous. As it is, he is arriving in increasing numbers each year. A husbandman by nature, he makes automatically for the land, and eschews the cities. He is to be met with now in all parts of the country ; but, curiously enough, one of his most popular haunts is the far northern province of Misiones, where the climate already begins to approach tropical conditions.

The Russian immigrant in many respects stands quite apart from all the rest. To the newcomer the appearance even of the Turk—as westernised in the south !—might well betray nothing to distinguish him from his neighbours. Not so that of the Russian. In greasy garments and high-top boots, he is still the typical peasant of the north—uncouth, unclean,

and generally, alas! unpopular. Indeed, it is a little doubtful as to how far Argentina is to be congratulated on this new influx of sordid humanity. The poor creatures fill a gap, and perform a certain amount of work, but I much fear that this is the most that can be said in their favour. It is quite possible that the free air and climate of the land may effect an improvement—eventually perhaps even in the intelligence—of these peasants. At present they meet with scant respect on the part of their native fellow-workers.

Indeed, the theory as to the improving nature of Argentine surroundings is supported to a certain extent by the foreign colony in the neighbourhood of Colon in Entre Rios. This is peopled almost entirely by Russians, Scandinavians, Austrians, and Poles. The community was established for some while ere the general influx of the people of these nationalities took place. The good folk here are undoubtedly of a far higher grade of civilisation than the later arrivals. But it is a moot point whether the former were in the first instance similar to the others, or whether the latter have been drawn from a lower stratum in the social scale of the peasant. As to the Austrian and Scandinavian settlers, these have now become fairly numerous, and it must be said that they compare very favourably indeed with the average type of Russian labourer who finds his way to the Republic.

The sole remaining species of immigrant who is

worthy of special mention as a class is represented by the Turk. Though last, he is certainly not least in the point of interest. There is undoubtedly much in Argentina that is wont to upset the rather narrow racial theories that are conceived by many. Forgetful of the part of so many Turks as played in the 'Arabian Nights' and of the well-beaten caravan tracks of the near Eastern deserts, the Ottoman is frequently imagined as a stay-at-home person whose individual frontiers of adventure are limited in the extreme. In Argentina he has found a second Arabia—a green land instead of a yellow—and there you may see him as he actually is.

His headquarters are in Buenos Aires. Here he peoples a small district of his own in the neighbourhood of the docks, sufficiently remote, however, from the Boca quarter of doubtful repute that lies to the south of the chosen spot. The district of the Turk is one of shops and storehouses filled with almost every variety of wares of the cheaper order, from groceries and rolls of cloth to scissors and knives. Little retail business, however, is effected in these establishments themselves, since they serve rather as centres of trade ramifications that spread out far and wide over the land.

It is from here that the Turkish merchant will set out with his quaint, square, box-like cart filled to its utmost capacity with an astonishingly comprehensive assortment of goods. The start resembles not a little the setting out of a ship upon its voyage,

and the journey itself is as much at the mercy of circumstances as is that of the sailing vessel or minor tramp steamer. The pedlar, once upon his travels, may attain to the sub-tropical north, or the zone of fresh breezes in Chubut or the Rio Negro. The fluctuations of his commerce are to him what are the variable breezes to the 'wind-jammer.' Driving his team of horses through dust and mud in turn, he will visit the estancias and 'camp' hamlets that lie along his route, supplying both agriculturist and Gaucho with such domestic necessaries as they require.

There are times when his travels are conducted upon a real boat that floats upon genuine water. Enterprising merchant that he is, he has taken under his protection the zone of islands created by the great network of streams between Buenos Aires and the Paraná river. He will take his flat-bottomed boat, sunk almost to the gunwhale beneath its load of merchandise, and will paddle his way across the Tigre, and, emerging from the Lujan river, will send his craft along the watery intricacies of the innumerable streams. The island-dwellers have a welcome for him, since the bringing of the wares to their very doors saves them many hours of travel and of hard rowing. Indeed, whether on the 'camp' or by the riverside, he is a person entitled to a certain amount of consideration, since he has fostered this traffic with infinite care, and has elaborated the art of peddling to a point that has

raised it to an important and formidable branch of commerce.

It is perhaps needless to explain that a verdict on the utility of the Turk at the hands of local storekeepers and the like should not be accepted as final. The attitude of the owner of the *tienda*, *boliche*, or *pulperia* towards the Ottoman is uncompromisingly direct. He regards him, in fact, much in the same light as the estanciero views the locust. The status of the Turk—from reasons of religion, race, and the lowliness of his trade—has never been high in the land. But, should aught occur to his horses, harness, or van to cause a breakdown, the house of the local storekeeper is undoubtedly the very last to which he would apply for assistance. Were he sufficiently rash to attempt this, the local Whiteley might safely be counted on to render aid in a fashion entirely his own.

Indeed, on several occasions I have heard the opinions of the Turk's commercial rivals of older standing expressed at first hand. Once, in Entre Rios, I was favoured with an especially detailed analysis of the Ottoman and his methods. I was chatting in the shade of the trees with the owner of a very small estancia who, in addition, was endowed with an exceptionally large flow of speech. He had passed from the subject of the great river systems of the Paraná and Uruguay—a topic that is naturally of great interest to the Entreriano—to that of general politics, which also concerns the Entreriano no less

than anyone else. Then, provoked possibly by one of the few remarks successfully dovetailed by the listener, he branched off abruptly on to the topic of the Turk—the unspeakable Turk!

No such thing as animosity, he claimed, existed between him and this itinerant creature who came to infest the Entre Rios roads. Could one imagine such a state as hostility between the jaguar and the camp skunk? (Needless to say it was the Turk who was pitchforked into the representation of the latter animal.) Contempt, yes! Since there were reasons that affected the honour, the labour, and the good of the land. Argentina was the country of the worker! It called to its bosom the labourer of the soil. Hence the Italian, the Spaniard, the Russian; even the Jews of the colony just to the north. Yes, he could forgive their very Judaism, since they ploughed the land and delved into it. And then—ah, yes, of course, there were the English, too! He would have put them first, were he not certain that the señor would understand that in such matters as these the most important invariably come at the end! In any case he, for one, regarded these with respect, with honour, nay, even with a gratitude that came directly from a swelling heart. It was no more than they deserved. They were *producers*, one and all—men whom he was proud to call his brethren, since they, together with himself, turned this soil and caused it to sprout forth its harvests.

After a quantity of further eloquence he turned

more directly to the subject of the offending Turk, and proved by flights of political economy the dangers that the presence of this class of sycophants and financial vampires was likely to bring to the general community.

At length the man ceased, and occupied a temporary lull in his eloquence by a hospitable proffer of the light beer of the country. His theories certainly had sounded well, and his arguments gained not a little force from the claim of absence of bias that accompanied them. It was not until we had reached the interior of the house that I made a discovery. One half of the building constituted the dwelling quarters ; the other half was dedicated to the purposes of a ' camp ' store ! Yet, for all that, I am by no means convinced that his theories were erroneous.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BRITISH EMIGRANT IN ARGENTINA

Argentina as a Capitalist Country—Chances of the Agriculturalist and Artisan—Dangers of a Leap into the Dark—A Comparison with the Italian—Advantages enjoyed by the Southerner—Some Tragic Instances of Failure—The Fate of the Demoralised—Penalties of Ignorance—The Chances of the Small Farmer—British Settlements—The Case against Manual Labour—Opportunities for the Specialist—The Commercial Clerk—Necessary Qualifications—A Country of Chances—Status of the Clerk—From Hired to Hirer—Life in the 'Camp'—The *Mayor domo* and his Juniors—Ways and Means—Questions of Remuneration—Duties and Relations with the Gaucho—Recreations—Attributes of the 'Outer Camp'—Promotion and Managership—The Top of the Tree.

THE interest evoked in England concerning the prospects offered by the Argentine labour market was brought very strongly to my notice by the mass of correspondence that flowed in after the production of my last volume on the country—an epistolary influx so weighty that, to my extreme regret, private replies were rendered impossible in the majority of cases. In order to avoid a repetition of this enforced discourtesy, I will endeavour, as fully as possible, to sum up the situation in town and

country so far as it affects the financial chances of intending settlers in various walks of life.

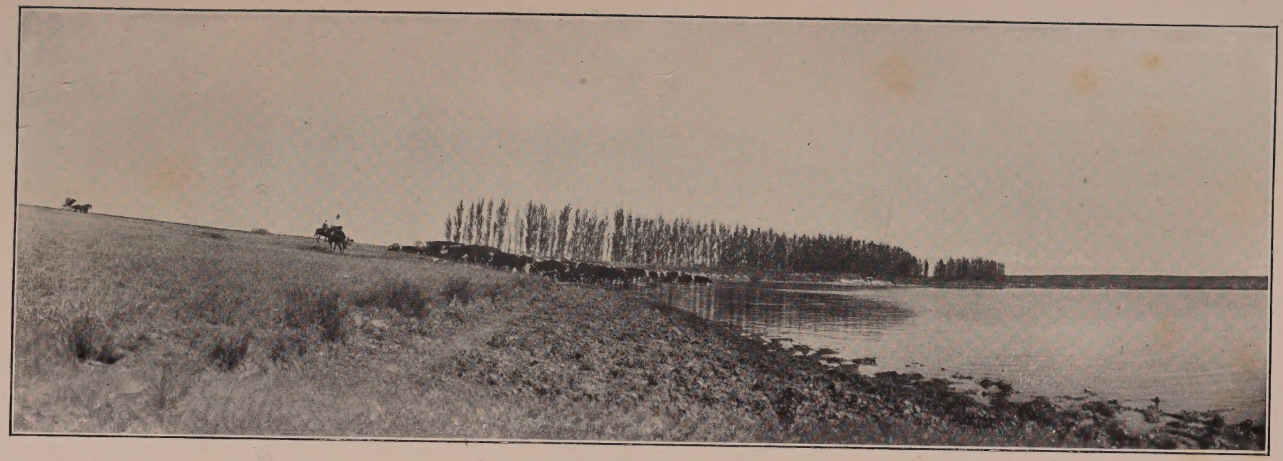
First of all let it be emphasised that Argentina is undoubtedly becoming more and more the country of the capitalist. In this respect it is merely marching side by side with other nations of rapidly increasing wealth. In these pages there is no place for questions of the whys and wherefores, rights and wrongs, of the matter: the practical point of view alone obtains. The phase, moreover, concerns the newcomer to a very small degree, unless he form one of the class whose private fortune is just sufficient to enable him to launch out into a venture that, from the slenderness of his means, must necessarily be endowed with no little element of risk. Room for him remains, further afield than in the past—but of this more later.

To deal first of all with those who may be ranked as private soldiers in the ceaseless stream of the great army of emigration—the agriculturalist and artisan. To my certain knowledge the glamour of Argentina is at present attracting no small number of the more capable and enterprising of both these classes. It is in regard to them that it is necessary to speak most strongly.

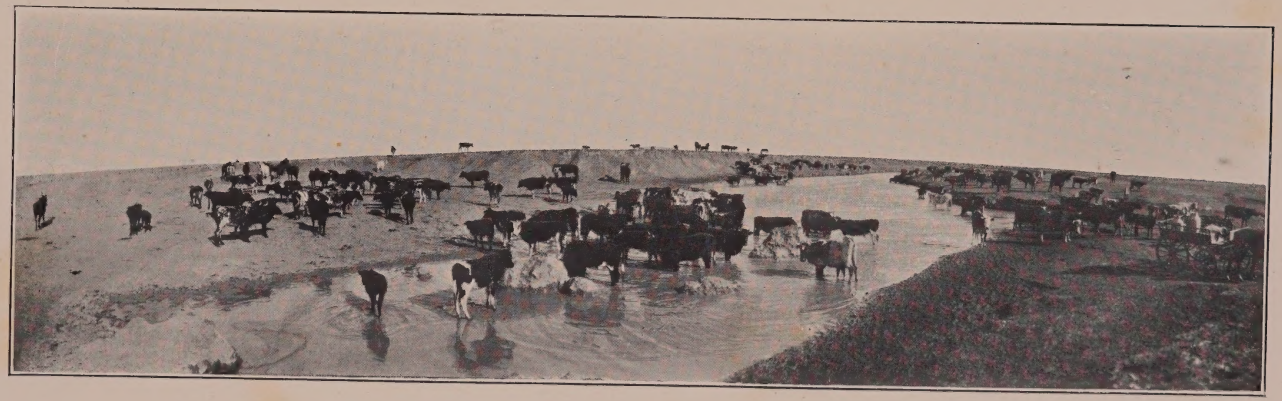
When the talk that reaches his ears deals with broad results rather than with the methods by which these are achieved, it is not unnatural that the farm hand or carpenter, desirous of bettering his lot, should imagine his disembarkation at Buenos Aires

as accompanied by no more inconvenience than that of a landing in a British Colony. It does not occur to him that his venture—with all the suddenness of a passage from the deck of a British steamer to the custom house—will cause him to be plumped abruptly into surroundings the like of which he has never even conceived. Strange folk, speaking a foreign tongue, hitherto unsuspected customs and habits at every turn—cast out into all this and into the tremendous ordered medley of a great city as well, he may well gasp in the helpless bewilderment of the man whose past has been abruptly cut away from the present.

Utterly confused in mind, he will turn to his own countrymen as a natural source of assistance. And, with the exception of a couple of remote suburbs and the banking and wholesale business quarter, the area of which, of course, is insignificant in size compared with that of the entire town, he may walk many a mile ere he will hear a single word of his native tongue. Having arrived so far, let us suppose the case of the artisan one of the bright and successful ones that are to be met with. Assistance to the meritorious is seldom wanting in Buenos Aires: as for work, there is no doubt that the demand for it exceeds the supply. Provided that he is able to compete with the efforts of his laborious Italian brother craftsman, and that in due course he obtains sufficient mastery over the Spanish language to serve him for practical purposes, he is free



AT THE EDGE OF THE POOL



A HERD AT NOONDAY

of the country. Its gates once open to him, it would be strange did he not prosper. Indeed, the man with sufficient ability to neutralise the handicap of his start in the new life could scarcely fail in his after efforts ; for the extent to which this disadvantage necessarily discourages and retards the energies of the newcomer cannot be overestimated.

The Italian immigrant lands under quite different, and more favourable, auspices. Speaking a tongue so nearly allied to the Spanish that conversational intercourse is possible even in the first instance between the members of either nation ; alighting in the midst of hundreds of thousands of his own countrymen—he has but to take his place in one of the numerous trades of which his brother Italians have already secured a practical monopoly. Climatic conditions and the innumerable precedents that serve as an aid to the employer in the weighing of his industrial possibilities are only a couple more of the numerous advantages that the Italian enjoys over the northerner.

Italian labour, in short, has been accepted with alacrity in the bulk : that of the British—such little as has been offered—is looked upon dubiously and with no little misgiving. It is the common belief at home that the daily labour of an Englishman exceeds that of a southerner, such as an Italian. In many parts of the world I hope and believe this to be true. Unfortunately, a long experience has proved that it cannot generally be accepted in

Argentina. There the common opinion has almost passed into a proverb that the Britisher, whether mechanic or agriculturalist, is of little account on the first rung of the ladder. Unless a foreman, he may be ranked as of the useless class, it is considered.

To a certain extent the supposition must necessarily be correct. Should the emigrant fail to obtain almost immediate promotion from the ruck of workers, with whom he is out of sympathy both in customs and speech, his environment will inevitably tell upon his character. With his energies sapped by discouragement he will absorb the less commendable traits of his half-understood companions, and a ship tossed aimlessly on a confused sea, he is too prone to throw out an anchor of strong drink. In a country where the mass of his competitors are temperate to a degree, the failing is even more than ordinarily fatal. The situation is imbued with a double element of tragedy, since the man had arrived in the country with the sole aim of working hard and thus bettering his condition—at present I am leaving the ubiquitous ne'er-do-weel by conviction entirely out of the question.

It is advisable to conclude with the dark side of this important question ere turning to its numerous lighter aspects. At two or three railway stations that feed the districts more especially favoured by British estancieros a small knot of loafers is regularly to be met with at the time of the arrival of each train. The group of loafers—usually idle only during

the exciting period of the train's halt—is general enough. But in the places that I have in mind each small crowd contains at least one Englishman. Dust or mud, according to the season, is thick upon the clothes of all the group. But those of the Englishman are dustier and muddier than all the rest. He had come amongst them as a swan amongst geese, and now his feathers have become the dingiest of all! As for his companions, he shares their common vices, but is deprived from comprehension of their more subtle virtues by reason of an unbridgable gulf in temperament. The English estancieros are good to him. He will carry their bags from the train to the waiting vehicle. For the time being he reassumes that jaunty air, evoked by their presence, that is his now only at long intervals, and will receive liberal payment for his small services. Then he will return, at a slouch once more, to his companions. He will gamble a little, and drink more, after which he will lie in the shade to wait for the next train, due on the following day. He has his compeers at home, it is true. But there, amongst their own countrymen, they may at least enjoy that interchange of ideas that is denied to the outcast.

A typical incident will complete the lamentable tale of the immigrant failure. In the course of my latest visit to Argentina I was the guest of an English estanciero of some thirty years' standing, whose repute and experience is famed throughout the country. Sheep-shearing was about to begin

at the estancia, and as we drove out one morning the *peones* were arriving from all quarters, the moving dust clouds struck up by their horses' hoofs dotting the landscape for far and wide.

In the neighbourhood of the homestead a couple of pedestrians were plodding forward across the pasture. Now a walker upon the open *campo* is an even rarer object than his brother the 'swagger' in the Antipodean bush—rare enough, indeed, to cause the estanciero to pull his horses round and to approach the strangers. They were English—the one an engine-driver, the other a labourer—who had come to plead for work.

As it happened, the estanciero was sorely in need of an engineer. There were many engines upon the place, and the sheep, for the most part, were wont to be shorn by machine. Willing as he was to pay exceptional wages to a steady man, he engaged the engine-driver and the other as well. Yet from the outset he held out no hope whatever for the success of the experiment. Affection for home and countrymen had produced a long-standing experience of the type equivalent to that of the 'sundowner.' And he was right. Within a few days the newcomers' places were empty again. With a small sum in their pockets they were plodding further afield—to rest awhile in some 'camp' inn, a *boliche* in which the memories of their restless trampings and spasmodic fits of labour might be obliterated in the fiery native *caña*. Yet it is probable that, like many others of

their kind, they had proved steady and efficient workers in the home country.

So much for the sombre aspect of the immigration picture. The general success of the British in the Southern Republic has been so marked and is so widely acknowledged that a glimpse of a proportion of failure that is seldom heard of must, I think, work for good rather than for evil. The pitiable side of the matter is that the misfortune arises so frequently not from within but from the outer force of circumstances. The moral is obvious.

Having now considered the possible fates of the immigrant who stumbles into Argentina unannounced, without further ado it is time to deal with those others whose lives from the outset fall into happier places. With an engagement in the Republic secured prior to embarkation, the future of the emigrant is assured. The reputation of a properly accredited Englishman for honesty and thoroughness still stands very high amongst the Argentines, and as foreman, whether in town or *campo*, opportunities for further advancement are frequently at hand. An engagement of the kind, of course, is not easy to be obtained, yet, so far as British enterprise is concerned, the public companies have their chief offices in London, where are the agents, too, of the private merchant or estanciero. In applying to such it must be remembered that suitable qualifications are absolutely essential. The emigrant is a little too ready to believe that his mere entrance into a new country

suffices to broaden his resources. Thus a joiner is apt, without further ado, to claim a place upon the land; and the agriculturalist is too prone to flatter himself that he can leap at one spring from solid ploughing to the more subtle feats of rural engineering. Such transformations were frequent enough, it is true, in the less strenuous past. Now, Argentina, in common with the rest of the world, demands the specialist. The value of the handy half-master of various craft is becoming more and more at a discount.

Isolated British colonies have been organised more than once in the Republic. Of such self-contained communities that exist as far as possible independently of their native surroundings, that of the Welsh in the south still remains as an example. The system, however, of individual tenant farming, as practised by the Italians, Russians, Poles, and Austrians, has not yet been attempted by our own countrymen. It is no exaggeration to say that a greater number of solid fortunes have been won from this particular branch of industry than from any other—gained, moreover, by those who, at the outset, were to all intents and purposes penniless.

The Britisher has not yet taken his place among these colonists. To those who, in common with the author, are acquainted with the successful operations of the 'cockatoo farmer' in our own Antipodean colonies, the reason of his absence from this remunerative field may at the first glimpse appear strange.

Yet he would be a rash man who would advise even the skilled agriculturalist to join the ranks of these folk—very honest, upright, and laborious, but with ideals so totally different from his own. The mud cabin, the stress of labour that is often prolonged beyond the day into the clear hours of a moonlight night, the voluntary renunciation (if such were ever known) of luxuries that to our own people are necessities—beneath the oppressive force of all this the British emigrant might well think his fortune won at too dear a price.

As in this space it is purported to deal merely with practical matters, the history of the British colonies in Argentina would be out of place. These have been conducted with a view to mutual support and convenience. To this end there have been considerable purchases of land, upon which a number of fellow-countrymen have settled together, each being allotted his own portion to work. With the exception of the Welsh colony, that still maintains its existence, none of these can lay the slightest claim to success. Yet it is obvious that the fault must have lain rather with the organisation than with the system itself.

In a country such as Argentina, where not only complete freedom but governmental goodwill towards settlers prevails, the intrinsic chances of success are infinitely more weighty than those of failure. With really efficient men at the head of affairs, and an acknowledgment on the part of the community that,

existing on Argentine soil, it is subject to Argentine law, the probability is that the venture would flourish equally with those of other nationalities. In the past, as I have had occasion to point out in another place, such colonies have evinced an unreasoning desire for self-government in so complete a form as to ignore the statutes of the Republic altogether.

Unless as a unit in one of these colonies it cannot be said that the working man *en masse* is adapted for an emigrant to Argentina. With the specially qualified I have already dealt, and there is, of course, no reason why a great number of the more intelligent should not prepare themselves for a successful career in Buenos Aires, or whichever province they may choose. With these exceptions, the broad fact remains that for those whose given task it is to toil with their hands alone, Argentina, owing to the peculiar forms of competition it offers, is not a fitting place.

The case of the specialist, however humble, is, of course, quite another one. The experienced groom or the trained shepherd may look with no little confidence to a successful career, provided always that he has placed himself in touch with his future employers in Argentina ere leaving the shores of his native country.

In view of the great increase that is now occurring in the sheep country of the south, a special opening is now available in these districts. The climate

of these southern regions, moreover, is particularly suitable, since it resembles that of England more closely than any other in the Republic.

The case of the commercial clerk is one that calls for at least as much attention as those of his humbler brethren. Some three years ago a controversy was raging in a very excellent technical paper that circulates amongst the junior mercantile ranks, 'Pitman's Weekly.' The point in dispute was the degree of success that a British clerk might reasonably expect in Argentina. In the course of the discussion the editor put to me the question concerning this possibility of success: provided that the candidate possessed three qualifications—commercial capability, a knowledge of Spanish, and a sum sufficient to support him for six months after the date of his arrival. My emphatically affirmative answer, when in print, was found side by side with equally uncompromising replies in the negative from various consuls. Yet I was upheld in my view at the time, and later experience has only served to accentuate my conviction in the justice of the belief.

In the first place, it is obvious that one of the education and accustomed surroundings of the mercantile clerk cannot fail to be a more malleable person than the artisan or agriculturalist. His more extended mental horizon must necessarily assimilate his environment with himself far more rapidly and to a far greater degree than is possible in the case of the others.

So much is patent under all circumstances, and is proved again in this particular field by the number of capable commercial juniors who, landing with neither the advantages of capital nor of a knowledge of the Spanish language, have built up large fortunes for themselves, and even now stand as magnates in the land. At the same time, far from advocating the journey to the Republic on the part of those who do not possess all three of the qualifications, I would deprecate the venture in the strongest possible fashion. It demands now, to a far greater extent than in the past, a degree of courage and ready resource that is the fortunate possession of very few.

Turning from these grave elements of doubt, let us follow the possible career of the efficient man well qualified to play his part in the commercial progress of the new country. In this enlightened age it is probably unnecessary to explain that the highways of the La Plata district, the name notwithstanding, are no more paved with silver than are the streets of London with gold. The intrinsic values of actual 'billets' are very little in excess of those in England. The rates of salary rule higher, it is true, but the cost of living, as a counterstroke, is raised in proportion.

The minor advantages the clerk will enjoy in the first instance are these: a freedom from many of the disciplinary and irksome office regulations, a wider intercourse with persons of his own nationality, and an improved social position which is necessarily of material service to him in his career.

By the mere tenure of his post he is endowed with a far greater degree of importance and responsibility than he would enjoy in a similar position in England. His immediate world is infinitely broader, and—here lies the point to be marked—his opportunities very much more numerous in proportion. The step from clerk in a large concern to principal in a small one is not so steep in any part of the new world as in the old. Here, where the comparatively small number of fellow-countrymen causes friendship and joint enterprise to sprout apace, it is at least as common as in any other part of America.

There is sufficient proof in the past of the frequency of this transition from the hired to the hirer. The business community of Buenos Aires, wealthy and deeply respected as it is, consists for the greater part of what are known as self-made men, and of those that remain without this category the majority are separated by merely a generation from the rest, being the sons of these same self-made men.

Now, since there is no doubt that Argentina, far from being exhausted as to her resources, stands only at the early commencement of her true maturity—and the full bloom of that maturity, when it occurs, even the most optimistic can scarcely picture—it must surely stand to reason that this process of promotion has not ceased. As a matter of fact, it continues much as before. Indeed, the astonishing array of new industrial fields that are yearly being opened up, must have increased the speed of the

movement, but for the proportionate increase in the number of new arrivals which has served as a check, and has maintained the local balance of affairs.

It may be taken for granted that there are few who leave their own shores for far-away Argentina and at the same time are reconciled to the idea of remaining in a subordinate position to the end of the chapter. There are equally few of the capable men who have found themselves disappointed in their expectations—a cheerful view that the Buenos Aires capitalist, once in the same frail boat that bears the present-day clerk, will corroborate.

It is a curious fact that the higher the Englishman mounts in the social scale, the greater are the prospects that Argentina offers him. Those whose means have enabled them to purchase land have found their original capital returned to them many times over during the past decade. Indeed, the recent history of Argentine land-tenure holds a romance that deserves many pages to itself. We are at present concerned with those who work upon the soil, owning none of it.

The owner of an estancia has beneath him a second in command, known as the *mayor domo*, whose duty it is to assist his chief, and to take entire charge of the operations during the latter's absence. Beneath the *mayor domo* again, if the estancia be of sufficient size to warrant their presence, are others, ranked curtly as second, third, fourth, and so on, much in the fashion of the nomenclature of mercantile marine

officers. Their duties are to supervise and to partake actively in the management of the estate.

England, to a far greater degree than any other country, has sent men out to this end. The great majority are of the type of which the mother-country may well feel proud. Matching in hardihood and vigour their brethren in the British colonies, they have this advantage in addition, that their social experience has usually been of an order superior to that of the English inhabitant, whether of Buenos Aires or of any other large Argentine city. A few years, moreover, spent in the 'camp' give an insight into the life of the country such as the townsman, pure and simple, seldom acquires during his existence.

He to whom the *campo* is unfamiliar can never hope to know the real heart and sentiment of Argentina. The *mayor domo* and his class not only work *in* the country, but make themselves *of* the country. The great bosom of the 'camp' has drawn them inwards to itself. In consequence of this—to descend abruptly to the practical—the young agriculturalists are popular amongst the Argentines as well as amongst their own people, and the number of important Argentine land-owners whose interests are served by British managers is very great.

The occupation—like many another that is of the strenuous and virile order—renders back at first very little material remuneration, it is true. The man in whose charge are numerous Gauchos, who rises with the dawn to gallop for hours over the plain

in order to ' revise camp,' to superintend the ' rodeos ' —those huge cattle musterings—to cast a watchful eye on fence-lines, pumps, and the progress of the crops—this hardy person, for all his responsibilities and toil, is wont to receive in exchange no more than the pittance of a clerk. He is in all probability a public school man, since it is a curious fact that, the more costly the education, the greater is the probability that its recipient, in straits for a livelihood, will seek the land, and will adopt a ploughboy instead of a professor for his tutor.

It is but natural that onlookers should lament the apparent waste of the previous schooling. Like so many other processes, however, that are wrong merely in theory, this blending of the public school boy and the agriculturalist is frequently responsible for astonishingly successful results. Compared with the commercial clerk, for instance, whose experience of life has been confined to a single class alone, the public school boy, with his wider range of human knowledge, possesses infinitely greater chances when launched into the democratic community of the land.

So far as creature comforts are concerned, life upon an estancia contrasts favourably with that upon a sheep station in the Antipodes. In a country where servants, however expensive, are numerous, the *mayor domo* and his juniors can attend to their pastoral and agricultural duties, free, at all events, from the irritating needs of domestic self-help.

Since every necessity of life, moreover, is provided by the owners of the property, the stipend, such as it is, may be looked upon in the gratifying light of pocket money. It is true that a comprehensive jaunt to Buenos Aires would probably swallow up the accumulation of a year; nevertheless, the advantages of intact monthly receipts are not to be underestimated.

As is the case with all else in the steady career on the land, promotion upon an estancia is slow, but sure. From the mere nature of the occupation an exhibition of brilliancy at the outset is, of course, out of the question. Indeed, the line which is supposed to mark the conclusion of the mere first principles of agricultural education is a strangely elastic one. There arrives a period when the beginner believes that he knows all, a second when he knows merely what he believes, and a third when belief and knowledge go hand in hand towards actual experience. For it is necessary for him not only to be wise in the tastes of the soil, but in the moods of the Gaucho as well. He must realise the points where the latter's dignity and sentiment lie, as well as those earthy spots that will produce maize, or wheat, or linseed. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that a bad farmer with contented *peones* is in better case than an arch-expert in agriculture surrounded by dissatisfied stock-riders and shepherds. It is only natural, therefore, that the beginner's relations with the Gaucho will be watched and noted,

and that the result will prove instrumental in shaping his future career.

The comparative 'greenness' in the case of quite a newcomer may be tested by his behaviour when confronted with the *maté* bowl—the gourd, with its *bombilla*, through which the Paraguayan herb tea is drawn up into the mouth. *Yerba maté*, the most healthful and invigorating of beverages, resembles oysters. The first tastings leave some doubts; but the later-day sippings destroy these one by one, until *yerba maté* becomes to the 'camp' man as longed for and as indispensable as are hen's eggs to the iguana.

The leisure hours upon an estancia are well enough filled, although, of course, the degree of comfort and amusement to be obtained depends largely upon the will of the landed proprietors. A large estancia, situated in a comparatively populous neighbourhood, will offer nearly all the outdoor recreations that are to be obtained in sporting centres at home. Polo and improvised race-meetings here hold out none of those financial terrors that so restricts participation in these sports in countries where horseflesh is the property of the rich alone. There may even be tennis and croquet lawns attached to the estancia house, and a half-dozen putting holes contrived in the neighbouring paddocks—receptacles that occasionally meet with disaster, splayed out hopelessly by the hoofs of the rightful tenants, the cattle. Indeed, on more than one well-known estancia the billiard-room in the main house is wont to be crowded by the

men upon the place each Saturday night. Such gatherings, however, are by invitation alone, for the juniors on a property of the kind are invariably assigned their own quarters and their own mess, and are entirely independent of the establishment of the owner or manager.

An estancia in the 'outer camp,' the remoter fringe of civilisation, has, of course, far less to offer in the leisure hours. Here the life is more akin to that waged in our own colonial 'back-blocks.' The compensations for the more solitary existence lie in the rapid schooling that necessity compels, and in the greater degree of authority with which the newcomer is necessarily endowed in a district where so few of his kind are to be met with.

However modest may be the beginning of the man who 'goes on an estancia,' the promise of his future need be by no means small. The height of his ambition at the outset is to become manager of one of the great pastoral and agricultural concerns where cattle and sheep are counted by the tens of thousands, and where all else is upon a similar scale. With luck and shrewdness he will attain to this—in good time, by which is implied no small number of years. Once in this position, his material reward is substantial. His own master to a degree unusual in other professions, both as regards his private life and estancia operations, in receipt of a liberal salary, a dweller in a luxurious home, with a host of tried men careering to and fro at his orders—the broad

leagues, for all practical purposes, might well be his own, and, indeed, it is with a pride akin to that of the owner that he learns to regard them.

As a matter of fact, many such managers of the greater estancias are themselves owners of properties that, in turn, are manipulated by equally independent managers. For, once at the top of the tree, the first-class manager enters the charmed ring of the initiated and important, who know to a nicety the true value of land and the best means of securing it. And the overlooking of one estate with another of his own, or several, at the back of the billet, goes no small way towards lessening the precariousness of livelihood!

In view of the numbers that enter the estancia lists, the reward is for the few, of course. But it must be remembered that in this case, as well as in those of the artisan and clerk, I have only instanced the possibilities that lie before those who have entered the country without capital, and who, therefore, have every reason to expect a strenuous struggle. The man with capital to invest is in altogether another case, since Argentina has proved itself a land where the capitalist has flourished to a phenomenal extent. That his less fortunate brethren are not without their chances in the Republic will, I think, be evident from the foregoing.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF THE PASTURES

Original Domestic Animals of the Plains—The *Conquistadores* as Pastoralists—Regulations affecting the Grants of Land—Advent of the Horse—Situation at the Abandonment of Buenos Aires—Introduction of Sheep and Goats—The Expedition of Nuflo de Chaves—Arrival of Cattle from Brazil—Ocean Transport in the Sixteenth Century—The *Peonia* and *Caballeria*—Refounding of Buenos Aires—How the Forsaken Horses had Fared—Increase of the Cattle—Questions of Live-stock Ownership—Branding—Its Uses and Abuses—' Cattle-lifting ' and its Punishment.

THE history of Argentine live-stock breeding dates back to a period very little removed from the foundation of the colony itself. The *conquistadores*, on their arrival at that great zone that included the numerous former provinces known as the district of the River Plate, found a strange dearth of all the European species of domestic animal. Of corresponding native creatures there were only two kinds that served the Indians. The first, the alpaca, was responsible for meat and wool; the second, the llama, was utilised as a beast of burden. Since the latter's strength, however, does not enable it to bear more than a third of a mule's load, the animal's capabilities as a carrying agent were

inconveniently restricted. Such other needs as the simple tastes of the Indians knew were supplied by hunting and fishing.

By means of the chase the aborigines varied their frugal régime of diet by the meat of the deer, vicuña, guanaco, and a few lesser animals, as well as by the fish drawn from the great rivers. The plains, in fact, were quite innocent of the ruddy and white specks with which the innumerable companies of cattle and sheep so richly endow their panorama in these days.

It was obvious, for the sake of the *conquistadores'* digestive organs, that the primitive state of the South American domestic supplies could not be allowed to continue. Spanish colonisation, for all the feverish lust that characterised the phase, was by no means deficient in very sound and practical methods. One of these was instanced at the very inception of the general enterprise. In the days when the tide of white men was yet eddying in thin, tentative streams over the virgin soil, concessions for the ownership of districts the size of European countries were sought for and obtained with scarcely as much difficulty as a modern syndicate would encounter that desired the control of the lighting or water supply of a minor municipality. When once the Spanish court became familiarised with the ethics of the new continent a wise provision was included in these concessions. The titled adventurer was granted his licence to found a town

and to govern the country in its neighbourhood—on condition that he stocked the district beneath his control with an adequate supply of horses, cattle, goats, sheep, and other domestic animals. In the majority of cases the exact number of such creatures to be shipped was stipulated.

It may be taken for granted that the pioneers, who were far more concerned with the accumulation of a rapid fortune and of material power than with the humdrum occupations of agriculture, looked upon these costly stipulations with no little disfavour. In many instances they doubtless endeavoured to evade their full compliance. But here the salutary law of necessity stepped in. Without the live-stock the failure of the new settlement was almost inevitable—a failure that directly involved the ruin of its chief.

Thus experience taught unquestioning compliance with the law, and it is certain that the regulation saved the new colonies from the reckless authority of many of the more irresponsible characters. Yet, with so much more at stake on the part of the governors, it is doubtful whether the forced labours of the Indians towards the prosperity of the settlements were any the lighter.

The horse was the first domestic creature to be landed on the shores of Argentina. Since the Spanish advent here was marked by continuous hostilities with the natives, it was but natural that an animal adapted for warlike purposes should

take precedence of the rest. In 1536 Don Pedro de Mendoza introduced a number of these to the first settlement on the shores of the La Plata that struggled so desperately for existence on the very spot where the modern Buenos Aires now stands. Five years later the small colony, harassed to extinction by the ceaseless onslaughts of the Indians, and lacking almost utterly in supplies, was abandoned. Its inhabitants took boat, and sailed over a thousand miles up the streams of the La Plata, Paraná, and Paraguay until they found rest at Asuncion. But they left behind them a certain number of horses and mares, free to roam wild and uncared-for over the plains—and of these more later.

It savours suspiciously of a bull to say that the early history of Argentina was enacted in Paraguay. Yet in a sense this was so, since in the colonial days both countries were merged in one government, and the enforced desertion by the *conquistadores* of the south left Asuncion the centre and hub of affairs. Thus, although it is commonly said that sheep and goats were introduced in 1550 into the River Plate, and cattle in 1551, it must be remembered that the district into which they were brought was not Argentina nor the River Plate of present-day geography, but Paraguay.

The circumstances are these: in 1548 Nuflo de Chaves was sent to Lima by Irala, one of the boldest and most intrepid of the *conquistadores*. In an age

of jealous strife and of many claimants, the object of the mission was to obtain from the high Peruvian authorities the confirmation of Irala's governorship of Asuncion. The journey, across an unknown country and through hordes of hostile Indians, was a desperate one. Indeed, the risks involved were so great that Irala, thinking better of the matter, sent messengers in the track of the small expedition to order its recall—messengers who failed to come up with the diminutive force. The attempt, after all, proved successful, and the trusty lieutenant won his way through forests, mountains, and Indians, to Lima itself. Pioneer journeyings in those days were necessarily affairs of many months, and governmental decisions no more hasty then than now. It was not until 1550 that Nuflo de Chaves toiled back to Asuncion, bearing a dubious official message that affected Irala little, and sheep and goats in his train that influenced the destinies of the country far more.

A year or so later Juan de Salazar y Espinosa, whom royal decree had created treasurer of the River Plate Provinces, came down to Asuncion from the Brazils. Having set out from Spain, the route by which he arrived was an exceptional one, far more exceptional than the reason that compelled it — shipwreck on the Brazilian coast. He brought with him some Portuguese, one of whom, by name Gaete, was given charge of seven cows and a bull. The march was three hundred

leagues through a broken and dense country intersected by rivers. The cattle, however, arrived safely at Asuncion, and Gaete was rewarded by the present of a cow, a bonus the munificence of which amazed the colonists, and, indeed, gave rise to the saying, as a mark of astonishment, 'Dearer than Gaete's cow!'

Indeed, the value of these early importations of live-stock was naturally enormous. To imagine the transport of the animals from the *Madre Patria* to the newly-discovered shores is to conceive a picture the like of which must be almost unrivalled in the annals of the sea. The cattle, cooped up in the narrow deck space available in the galleons and still smaller caravels, must have been sufficiently unpleasant passengers at the best of times. In a gale of wind the lives of the daring Spaniards must have been hanging by a thread—a thread of so unpleasant a nature that for the time being it was probably a matter of indifference to them whether it snapped or not. Probably only those who, like the author, have known a 'blow' in a large cattle steamer can at all realise the scene in one of these frail and small craft of the past. The waves sweeping over the lofty prow, and smothering the low waist in its entirety, the wild plunging of the vessel to the tune of the thudding water and straining timber —this was a common enough event in the ordinary routine of a voyage. Add to the scene the pitiful strugglings of the animals as their bulky bodies

were washed to and fro, swept here and there amid the wreckage of partitions at the cost of many a human life as well as of their own, and you have a proportion only of the horrors of the tempest under such conditions! It was a rare voyage indeed when the survivors of the cattle approached anything like the number that were placed on board. Small wonder, therefore, that the value of those that first trod South American soil was almost equivalent to their weight in silver.

The indomitable spirit of the period, however, caused the cattle and other domestic animals to be brought out in ever-increasing numbers as the south-western procession of the vessels grew denser. Once well established within the country, their monetary value decreased rapidly to the point at which their ownership became possible to all. Indeed, after a while the grants of land to the pioneers were to a certain extent regulated on a basis of herds and flocks. Thus the *peonia*, or grant of land to a private soldier or labourer, comprised sufficient area to support ten pigs, twenty cows, five horses, one hundred sheep, and twenty goats. In addition, the humble folk were allowed as much land for an orchard as it was considered that a yoke of oxen could plough in a day, and were granted larger portions as well for the plantation of maize, wheat, and the like. The *caballeria*, the corresponding allotment to an official or person of distinction, consisted of exactly five times as much. In return

for the concession, the holders of the land were obliged, under penalty, to erect houses and shelters, and to stock and plough the soil.

In the meanwhile the tide of the white races was extending from Paraguay, sweeping back to the south-east, whence the first adventurers had been expelled after so many sufferings. In 1580 Juan de Garay came down from Asuncion with a powerful expedition and many domestic animals. Upon the spot where the old fort, now destroyed, had once stood, a settlement was founded for the second time —on this occasion for good, since the present Buenos Aires itself is the child of this very humble urban mother.

Once arrived at the spot, the Spaniards were lost in amazement at the sight of innumerable companies of horses that were roaming over the plains. They were the descendants of those few poor steeds, introduced by Mendoza, that had served the first Spanish settlers. Forsaken of necessity when the place was abandoned, they had been forced to shift for themselves. The colony had reverted to its original state of nature, and the horses had followed suit. Strangers to man, and completely wild, they had thrived and multiplied amazingly, as their many thousands proved.

From this point onwards it is possible to follow the history of the Argentine *campo* as distinguished from the northern territories with which they were still officially linked. The broad southern plains had

given the first hint of their tremendous power of sustenance, and of the wealth—exceeding even that of gold and silver bearing Peru—that lay dormant in their soil. The folk of Buenos Aires turned their attention to the benefits of pasturage. One of the first moves in this direction betrayed an imperial spirit that indicates how thoroughly the colonists were alive to the situation. In 1589 the *cabildo*, the local council, proclaimed that the inhabitants of Buenos Aires, as sons—metaphorical or actual—of the first *conquistadores*, were the rightful owners of all the herds of wild horses in the district. The Royal Audience, doubtless struck by the enterprise of the new colony, assented to the claim without demur.

By this time, too, cattle had become exceedingly numerous in the neighbourhood of Buenos Aires. In addition to the large numbers that Juan de Garay had brought down from the north, there had been many chance windfalls in the way of herds. Expeditions had crossed and recrossed the country to the north long ere the second founding of Buenos Aires. Stragglers from these, their numbers multiplied in similar fashion to those of the horses, had wandered until they found themselves within the jurisdiction of the colony on the banks of the La Plata. The cattle, indeed, increased to such an extent that their occasional invasions into freshly-sown land was the cause of much damage. In order that this inconvenience might

be obviated the animals were placed under the care of a person who contracted for their charge, and who was paid in corn and other products of the soil, money being scarce at the time.

It is but natural that, with the course of time and the maturing and solidification of the province, the question of live-stock ownership, whether public or private, became more important. Its acuteness, however, remained only comparative for centuries, owing to the great size of the herds and the extent of the open country. Nevertheless, the custom of branding cattle existed almost from the first. One of the earliest records is that of a mark registered by Francisco Salas Vidella as far back as May 19, 1589. The form it assumed, according to the record, was akin to that of the 'pothook' of the very early student. On the other hand, it might equally well have signified a gallows—an eloquently taciturn threat to the intending cattle thief.

In any case the brand must have been considered a distinct success, since on the very day following the innovation the local council petitioned that its author, the blacksmith Bernadino de Torres, should not be allowed to leave for Peru on account of the need that Buenos Aires had for his professional services. It is not recorded whether Bernadino de Torres regretted the excellence of his work and the inconveniences brought about by his consequent fame.

Needless to say, the blacksmith was not hailed

as a benefactor by all classes. Once introduced, the branding iron was wont to be applied, not only to those poor human chattels, the Indians and slaves, but to malefactors in general and 'cattle-lifters' in particular. In the early days death alone was the punishment meted out to these latter; but later on the penalties became more varied, assuming a sliding scale, according as to whether the guilty one was a first offender or an 'old hand.' Thus, the first offence was punished by branding the shoulder, the second by a similar operation upon the hand. The instrument that was heated and employed for the purpose, it may be mentioned, was of silver. In the cases where even such drastic lessons as these failed to wean the offender from his affection for other folk's cattle, the penalty for the third detected crime was public flogging, followed by execution.

Much later in the history of the *campo* the correction of this particular type of thief was, in at least one instance, effected in both a more humane and more picturesque fashion. The head of a slaughtered bull was placed upon that of the malefactor, and, staggering beneath the weight of the unwelcome adornment, he was led through the streets of the town, and made to stand in public shame. After a couple of days' rest this unfortunate species of Bottom was led out once more to undergo a second salutary promenade and penance.

Such examples, however, were rare enough

in proportion to the number of depredations committed. Anything in the nature of adequate supervision as regards the many hundred leagues of *campo* populated by the roaming herds of wild, or semi-wild, cattle, was of course, impossible. Indeed, the presence of these unguarded animals would seem to have influenced human nature, elsewhere as well as here, to such an extent as to leave an important mark on South American history. The *boucaniers*, or buccaneers, for instance, originally sprung, as a class, from the unlicensed hunters of wild cattle in Haiti, from which trade the step to the major order of marauding was an easy one. Since in Argentina the cattle raiders were Spaniards, and owners of the soil, they were satisfied with the levying of a toll upon the beasts alone. As compensation for the limitation, the methods employed by the plunderers remained thorough and remorseless for centuries.

CHAPTER X

THE STORY OF THE PASTURES (*continued*)

The Temptations of Abundance—Paternal Legislation—An Old-time Cattle Hunt—Wild Scenes—A Merciless Quest of Hide—The Jaguar and the Unconsidered Feasts—Effects of Prodigality upon the Dogs—Cattle as Defenders of the Soil—Some enemies of the Herds—The *Mataperros*—Marauding Indians—Local Volunteers—Fate of Native Animals—Mule-breeding—Slighted Sheep—A Seventeenth-century Trading Expedition.

It was not long ere the colonists in general began to take as a matter of course the pastoral wealth with which they had become surrounded. The live-stock represented to them an inexhaustible mine of meat and hide into which they could delve with impunity. So reckless were their onslaughts upon the herds that the multiplying of these—although the process continued—was seriously hampered for a while. In the end the authorities intervened to forbid the slaughtering of more than a certain number of cattle each year. The regulation was obeyed only in part; but it sufficed to set in flow once more the rapid tide of increase.

Indeed, the extravagance of the settlers exceeded in many directions the abundance that had given

it birth. It applied to almost the entire range of domestic animals, and descended so far down the scale as to include even the humble fowl! In order to preserve this species of the feathered race the authorities imposed a rather curious policy of protection affecting the birds. The price of the eggs was raised. Instead of the accustomed charge of one peso the hundred, the dealers were officially forbidden to exchange more than two dozen for that amount. At the first glimpse the policy appears not a little bewildering. Yet the strategic move was successful—since it was undoubtedly more profitable to turn the yolks into chickens than to eat them in the shell! The regulation, nevertheless, must have proved sufficiently irksome to such an egg amateur as the Spaniard.

As may be imagined from this, the early government of the River Plate was essentially of the paternal order. It regulated the markets, and forbade the commerce of provisions outside the precincts of these establishments. It looked to the minor comforts of the colonists as well. For instance, on one occasion, when Buenos Aires was threatened with a quite unnecessary scarcity of fish, it commandeered the services of ten Charruas Indians, piscatorial experts, whose duty it became to supply the town with the harvests of the waters.

The effectual power of the early authorities ended, however, from the force of circumstances at the boundaries of the towns. Although in the course

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of a couple of centuries the numbers of the cattle had increased to many millions, it was against heavy odds. The cattle-hunt, as then conducted, was on a tremendous scale—a bloodthirsty and rather appalling affair.

Such an occasion afforded one of the wildest scenes in the history of the old-time *campo*. The gathering together of a select company of lawless and reckless spirits was the preliminary to the event. Riding up from all quarters, they would meet at some place of rendezvous chosen by their leader, each armed with a long lance tipped with a sharp steel crescent instead of a point. Then the men would sally out across the plain, the riders on each flank pricking in advance until the formation of the company was that of a half-moon. Sweeping along to where the cattle were browsing upon the coarse natural grasses, a stampede of the victims would ensue. As more and more of the horned beasts were drawn within the mesh of men and horses, the pandemonium may be imagined. The thunder of thousands of hoofs and the crashes of meeting horns, the hoarse cries of the men, the jingling of metal, and the glitter of the steel crescents borne aloft—the maddened processions swept as a whirlwind across the resounding plain.

Then, when sufficient hapless, blundering cattle were panting along within the coils, would come the moment to strike. With spurs dug into the horses' flanks and spears lowered, the riders charged

into the rearmost ranks of the press of cattle. As they passed on, drawing ever nearer to the vanguard, they left in their wake a long line of the struggling bodies of the cattle, hamstrung by means of their weapons. When the fleetest of the fugitives, the last to be reached, were at length down upon the ground, the riders would return upon their tracks at their leisure in order to kill and skin the wounded beasts.

All that was reaped from these tremendous slaughterings was a harvest of hide. For flesh in such quantities as this the hunters had no use whatever. A small portion fell to the share of jaguars and prowling dogs, who were wont to gorge themselves to the full; the bulk rotted where it lay.

A letter written as late as 1729 by a Jesuit missionary, Carlos Gervasini, throws some light upon the subject of animal abundance and human methods. Writing from Buenos Aires, he says: 'So numerous are the cattle in the neighbouring *campo* here that any landowner may take from ten to twelve thousand to breed from, merely for the trouble of lassoing them and driving them home. In order to take more than this number a special licence is required from the governor. The ships returning to Spain are filled with the hides, and none but good specimens of these are troubled about. As to the flesh, each man takes what he requires and leaves the rest to the jaguars and dogs.' After

which, Gervasini states that in no other country has he seen so many dogs nor such fat ones!

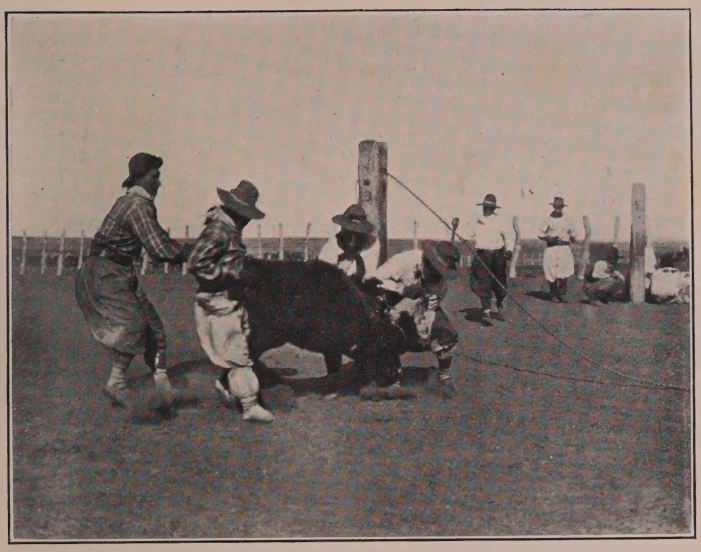
It was doubtless this free and easy method of bestowing gratuitous meals that had long ere this period inoculated the canine temperament with a deep-seated affection for beef. For generations the plains had been infested by packs of dogs that, responding to the call of the wild, had exchanged their domesticated condition for an utterly savage state. Wolf-like, it was their habit to go padding over the *campo*, emulating in their own fashion the hunting expeditions of the men.

According to some, such was the abundance of the cattle that the presence of the marauding dogs was something of a blessing. A certain Azcárate du Biscay, who in 1658 undertook a voyage to the River Plate in the interests of commerce, touches upon this point in a general description of the land and its people. 'The riches of these folk,' he states, 'consist of cattle which multiply so prodigiously that the plains are covered with them. If it were not for a number of dogs who devour the young, the country would be devastated by them.' He goes on to say that the same abundance existed with regard to horseflesh. In the town of Buenos Aires itself, however, there were very few who possessed these animals. This lack of horses, by the way, was principally on account of the trouble that their keep involved. All those who lived outside the radius of the town were inveterate

riders, and invariably went at a gallop—a description that proves how little the ethics of the 'camp' have changed in some respects from that day to this. The merchant adds that such horse-hide as was not exported to Europe was wont to be put to every conceivable purpose which it could possibly serve.

As a further proof of the astonishing quantity of the live-stock at that period the same writer gives an account of a stratagem that the inhabitants told him they were wont to employ in the case of an attempted invasion. According to them, should hostile craft appear upon the waters of the great river, it was their custom to drive to the threatened point of the shore such vast masses of bulls, cows, and horses that, even were the enemy not deterred from landing by the fury of the cattle, it was impossible for them to cut their way through the great press of beasts.

Argentina, it is true, is not the only country where cattle have been employed as allies by the defending forces. At the battle of Morat, for instance, the Swiss urged a herd of maddened bulls upon the English mercenaries, with disastrous results that are testified to by the red coats that still hang in the museum of Neuchatel. But this sudden massing and manipulation of such tremendous four-footed forces savours perhaps just a little of exaggeration, arch-expert in his trade as the *peon* was then, as now. The writer was only a chance



BRANDING CATTLE : I

BRANDING CATTLE : II

wayfarer in the land. It is not impossible that the men of the plains drew the long bow for the benefit of the merchant-stranger—it is, indeed, a process from which the globe-trotter is wont to suffer even to this day.

A century later, in any case, the numbers of the cattle were not considered proof against the attacks of their old-time enemy, the wild dog. Though the herds of the horned beasts had continued to multiply, the bands of their canine assailants, encouraged by such a plentiful supply of fresh meat, had increased out of all proportion. In the latter half of the eighteenth century these visitations had developed into a plague that called for repressive measures. A troop of militia was sent out into the *campo* with orders to wage merciless war on the dogs. The campaign was conducted on the stipulated lines: there were no prisoners; canine corpses littered the plains. The troop returned to Buenos Aires, happy in the consciousness of a duty well done. Though annihilation had proved impossible, they had thinned the hostile ranks.

On their return to the capital, however, the welcome extended to the soldiers struck them in the nature of a shock. It was unfortunate for many reasons that the inhabitants of Buenos Aires had cultivated an undue sense of the ridiculous. The luckless campaigners, instead of praise, were greeted with a shower of this very ridicule. Each was belauded with overwhelming and disconcerting

mock praise. Each, moreover, was solemnly invested with the title of *Mataperro*—the 'dog-killer.' This proved the climax. Volunteers for a second expedition were called for. None were forthcoming. The fear of further nicknames left the muster roll a perfect blank, devoid of a single name. From an economic point of view the coining of one word had induced far-reaching effects. For one thing, it had spared the lives of thousands of dogs, and had signed the death warrant of at least as many cattle. The reprieved wild dog—the *perro cimarrón*—continued to flourish until 1860, when, in a less sensitive age, the last of the canine bands was exterminated.

The metaphorical pursuit, however, of these marauding dogs has led us too far afield across the centuries. It is necessary to go back some two centuries and a half for a short while to follow the relations of the cattle with the sole remaining beings who, in addition to the white men and the animals, had to be taken into account. The Indian's taste in food was conservative to a degree. For some while after the arrival of the European he remained faithful to the meat of the native animals he had always known. Tempted at length by the countless equine troops sprung from the animals relinquished at the abandonment of the first Buenos Aires fort, he acquired a taste for horseflesh. To this he clung tenaciously for centuries, in spite of the accumulating hordes of cattle that roamed

everywhere in his neighbourhood. Had he joined his early efforts to those of the colonists in the hunting of bulls and cows, the live-stock history of the River Plate might well have been modified to no small extent. As it was, the cattle had nothing to fear from him in the first instance.

It was hardly to be expected that this state of affairs could continue. After a century or so the Indians of the pampa, though still feeding exclusively upon horseflesh, began to realise the commercial value of the horned beasts. So they, in turn, took to hunting the cattle. Amongst other things, the result was an increase of bitterness between the two races, and frequent attacks by the Indians on the colonists.

A corps of mounted volunteers was formed in Buenos Aires in order to restrain native aggression of the kind. Here again the fatal humour of the townsman found its opportunity. Something in the aspect of the company as it started out on its first expedition amused the onlookers. The play that the horsemen made with their lances as they rode was considered as of rather too free and showy an order. The bizarre 'swagger' proved their undoing; for they were immediately dubbed *Los Blandengues*—'the lancers,' the words being applied in a ridiculous sense, suggestive of brandishing—which nickname stuck to the corps so long as it existed.

Although applied with impunity to the cattle,

the rough and ready methods of self-help so much in vogue with the early colonists met with their natural result in the case of the native animals. During the first century of Spanish rule the vicuña and guanaco abounded. In accordance with the prevailing lust for spoil, many tens of thousands of the animals were driven together each year and slain. The flesh certainly met with more fitting treatment than that of the cattle. It was dried and converted into *charqui*—a process that is still applied to beef shipped from the country to Brazil and Cuba.

The spirit of the age entered into the distribution of the wool of these creatures. The coarse covering of the guanaco went to the common people, the finer fleece of the vicuña to the aristocracy. In those days the line between the classes and the masses was strictly and very practically drawn! But this instructive method of distribution lasted only for a while. The vicuña and guanaco, with a selfish disregard for the continuance of their species, grew beautifully less, until the regular hunts ceased altogether, and even the casual killings became matters of comparative rarity.

Still, although this lust for destruction was at work in some quarters, the spirit of production was equally busy in others. In Córdoba, for instance, the chief industry already consisted in the breeding of mules. At the middle of the seventeenth century

BRANDING CATTLE : III

BRANDING CATTLE : IV

about thirty thousand of these were sold annually. At the age of two the mules were wont to be sent from Córdoba to farmers in Santiago, Salta, and Jujuy. After remaining in one of these spots for three years they were sent on to Peru for sale. At this period it is worthy of note that the population of Potosi, which then boasted fifty thousand inhabitants, was ten times as great as that of Buenos Aires.

To pass from the most favoured animal of all to the least considered of any—the descent is from the mule to mutton. Almost throughout the colonial age the sheep was looked upon with disfavour. The slighted animal occupied almost the same position in Argentina as does the present-day rabbit in Australia. It is related that even beggars were wont to refuse with scorn an offer of mutton. Indeed, the animals were tolerated solely for the wool and tallow that they yielded. Strangely enough, this prejudice against mutton continued for hundreds of years, and not until a little more than a century ago did it finally die out and thus permit the merits of sheep flesh to come into their own.

A few more details furnished by Azcárate du Biscay will afford a rough insight into the commercial methods of the early middle ages of the colonial era. On his arrival at the port of Buenos Aires he found at anchor there twenty Dutch vessels and two English. They were ready to sail, being laden with hides, worked silver, and vicuña wool that

they had received on board in exchange for the merchandise they had brought out. Each ship being supplied with thirteen to fourteen thousand hides, there were almost three hundred thousand of the commodities reposing in the twenty-two holds.

As in Europe each hide was worth twenty-five English shillings and had cost only one-fifth of that amount, it is not difficult to compute the great profit that must have accrued to the merchants concerned. Yet the financial benefits of such expeditions were probably not incommensurate with the risks. Just at that period it is true that the colonial authorities had succeeded in obtaining some trading concessions, in favour more especially of the Dutch. But the motherland of Spain still looked upon such broad enterprise with infinite disfavour, and only awaited the faintest pretext to step in with drastic measures toward its suppression.

Azcárate made his way inland to Jujuy, in the northern province of that name, where he deposited the wares he had brought with him from Europe. After which he proceeded to Potosi, and bartered the goods—quite possibly left behind as a matter of precaution—in exchange for silver, both worked and in bars, and for vicuña wool. He returned with a mule caravan to Jujuy, whence he took carts, and successfully completed a four months' journey to Buenos Aires, continuing his negotiations and obtaining many hides upon the way.

So favourable had been the issue of his

negotiations that Azcárate discovered that his stock of silver far exceeded the maximum amount that the law permitted him to take from the country. But Azcárate was a man of resource. Instead of making directly for Buenos Aires, he turned aside a little in the last lap of his journey, and struck out for the banks of the River Lujan. Here he hired a boat, and placed within it the greater part of his valuable load of silver. Then he proceeded openly, and apparently innocent of all guile, to Buenos Aires.

Having loaded his vessel with the bulkier merchandise—which included sixteen thousand hides—he awaited the official visit of inspection with complacency. Everything being in order, and no more than the legal maximum of silver being in evidence, his vessel passed through the ordeal with flying colours, and was given permission to sail. On the departure of the officials the silver-laden boat came quietly alongside, and its precious cargo was safely transferred.

After which Azcárate, rejoicing, sailed out from the brown waters of the La Plata river into the blue waves of the open ocean. In view of the prohibitive restrictions then imposed upon general trade, it is to be feared that his stratagem was of the nature of an everyday affair on the part of the mariners and traders who came to visit the South American coast.

CHAPTER XI

THE STORY OF THE PASTURES (*continued*)

Some Questions of Ways and Means—Results of Spain's Colonial Attitude—Argentina's Promotion to a Viceroyalty—Consequent Impetus to Industry—Improved Methods of Meat-curing—Successful Agriculture as an Incentive to Freedom—Encouragement of Commerce by the Independent Government—First Strides in Sheep-breeding—Importation of Merinos—Southdowns—General Progress and Practical Improvements—The Evolution of the *Corral*—Introduction of Wire Fencing—Shorthorn and Hereford Cattle—Leicester and Lincoln Sheep—The *Sociedad Rural Argentina*—Its Organisation and Work—General Review of Live-stock History—Present Conditions.

In surveying the history of the live-stock throughout the colonial régime in Argentina the methods of the colonists are apt to be judged without an adequate inquiry into causes. The slaughtering of millions of cattle for the sake of their hides and horns alone, the abandoning of thousands of tons of meat to rot in the open, and, in fact, the general policy that resembles that of felling a huge oak in order to strip a few acorns from its branches—all this was lamentable, but at the same time unavoidable. One cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, even though the shell might be more valuable

than all the rest. In the case of the colonist, hides and horns had to be obtained at the expense of the meat. The latter's abundance, indeed, was valueless, since no market existed for its sale. Thus, to have hoarded up the giant herds of cattle for the sake of a mere increase in useless numbers would have meant the sacrifice of almost the sole source of revenue that the country possessed.

The commercial manipulation of this source itself was precarious enough. Spain, it is true, was a little disdainful of this sordid business of hides and horns, whose ethics lay so far beneath the glitter of Peruvian metal. Yet she controlled the commerce with a hand sufficiently firm as to leave no doubt that its value was by no means lost to her. It was essential, according to the mother-country, that all produce should be brought home to her own ports and to no others, in order that she might deal with it—in the genuine step-parental fashion of fiction.

The consequent regulations and restrictions, though extremely profitable to Spain, were sufficient to throttle the industry of the proudest colony. And Argentina, with a junior rank amongst the provinces, was subjected to the autocratic whims of the viceroys of Peru and Chile, in addition to the stern suppression of the mother-country. Spain, in fact, took exactly what suited her, and congratulated the infant colony upon a useless surfeit of its own.

To what extent this handicap had affected the River Plata Province became evident when, in 1778, the country was promoted to the seat of a viceroyalty and exportation became free. So far as the *campo* was concerned, a change occurred that was startling in its abruptness. The cattle industry was given an impetus that resulted for the first time not only in the killing but in the breeding of the animals as well. Almost simultaneously with the political change occurred another and no less important a one. A small colony of Irish arrived in the country, and these began immediately to instruct the colonist in the better methods of curing and preserving the meat, as well as in the proper refining of the fat for exportation. Thus the inception of the tremendous modern industries of Argentina was achieved by these very Irish who, being Roman Catholics, married and settled in the country.

It was, indeed, largely to the increasing force of this commerce of pasture and agriculture that Argentina owed her freedom from Spanish rule. With the great importance of the industries yet unrealised, the ambition of the colonists had naturally lain dormant. With the knowledge of wealth and power that grew with the waxing herds and the spreading ramifications of new industries, the demand for justice become even more sustained and acute. Patriotic as the colonists were to the motherland, Spain had grudgingly yielded her inch too late in the history of the new country. An earlier concession

might have staved off the era of independence—for a while.

The importance of the national industries was certainly realised to the full by those who were struggling to win their country's independence. The declaration of freedom, made on the twenty-fifth of May 1810, was scarcely more than a nine days' wonder in point of actual time when the provisional government, though itself insecurely established amidst the scenes of the internal wars, issued decrees that removed from commerce a multitude of restrictions and vexatious taxes. At the same time measures for the better preservation of the cattle were enforced—not before it was time, since the passages of the contending armies and those other destructive influences of a warlike period had reduced the numbers of the beasts to an alarming extent.

The successful termination of the war of independence did not free the pastures from strife and blood. Yet, notwithstanding the evil effects of the faction battles, the progress of the live-stock was continuous in quality, if not in quantity. So far as sheep were concerned, the first forward step had already been made during the last days of the viceroyalty.

In 1794 the pioneer representatives of the merino breed were introduced into the *campo* from Spain. The early experiences of these woolly immigrants were the reverse of favourable. Scarcely had the first flock begun to get accustomed to its new surroundings when it was all but destroyed by a great

thistle fire that raged fiercely over the plains. Caught in the whirl of the fierce conflict a little later, the unfortunate merinos were almost exterminated by the remorseless tide of armed men. Yet a number survived sufficient to lay the firm foundations of the race in the new Republic. By the year 1825 the merinos had begun to be distributed all over the country. Fresh importations of the breed were now effected, since its merit had attracted the attention of such well-known men as Martinez de Hoz, Mendoza, Olivera, Acosta, Flint, Latham, and others. Thus, between 1836 and 1838, the importation of merinos exceeded four thousand two hundred head.

In the year 1824 the first Southdown sheep had been introduced into Argentina. When the results of the mixture of these—and to a still greater extent that of the merino—with the native sheep were seen, the industry received a tremendous impetus. This will be evident enough from the fact that while in 1822 under four hundred thousand kilos of wool had been exported, in 1850 nearly eight millions of kilos were sent from the country.

Indeed, in order to follow the fluctuating progress of this particular period a few dates and bald statements, however irksome, are necesssary. From 1829 to 1832, for instance, occurred a great drought that caused the loss of enormous numbers of live-stock. After 1833, however, the pastoral industry received a most important addition to its scope, for it was in this year that General Rozas undertook his

famous campaign against the Indians. With the merciless reduction of the native tribes many new and fertile zones were opened up for grazing. A little later, when Rozas, in the full flush of his tyranny, had provoked a blockade of the Argentine ports by foreign squadrons, the business of the farmer retrograded temporarily to a point of stagnation, owing to the lack of an outlet for the produce.

The time had now arrived, however, when the primitive methods of farming began to give way, little by little, to the practical and economical methods of a scientific age. One of the first of these changes to be brought about was in the construction of the *corral*. For centuries the pattern of the old-time *corral* had remained the same. A couple of broad pits dug out from the *campo*, with the excavated earth heaped about the depressions—such was the main plan of the old live-stock shelters. The ramparts of earth were rendered doubly effective by the planting of the tala tree upon the mounds and thus obtaining the further protection of dense hedges. The exits, entrances, and means of communication between the two were engineered by such simple means as the employment of branches, lassoes, or any other convenient objects.

It was to these crude pits that the cattle were wont to be driven, and it was here that all the intricate manœuvring of 'parting' and sorting was accomplished. With the introduction of stout timber

fencing and of gates the procedure became infinitely simplified, and the delving operations ceased. That the innovation was brought about only so late in the day may be considered by some a slur on the intelligence of the early breeders. Yet the explanation is a perfectly natural one—the almost entire absence of timber that was the original characteristic of the *campo*, and the difficulties of transport that then obtained between the northern forest areas and the pasture lands of the pampa country.

In 1844 an innovation was brought about that, little though its importance was realised at the time, was destined to revolutionise the history of the Argentine pastures. Wire fencing was then imported for the first time, and the new fence lines laid down by Mr. Richard Newton at the Estancia Las Jaguëles, in the province of Buenos Aires. With the plains thus firmly bridled, the march of events becomes more rapid. In 1844 the first shorthorn bull was brought over the seas from England, and some ten years later the breed had become established and popular. From this period date the real steps in the improvement of Argentine cattle, and, indeed, of live-stock in general; for, the ball once set rolling, new species of all breeds were rapidly introduced, the one after the other. Hereford and other cattle, Leicester and Lincoln sheep, mares and stallions came from Europe to take their places by the side of the previous four-footed immigrants, and after this the range of the animals extended

steadily until it attained to the great scope which is apparent to-day.

A society, the *Sociedad Rural Argentina*, was formed in 1866 that was destined to wield an enormous and beneficial influence over all branches of agriculture in the Republic. It was founded by a distinguished group whose patriotic interests in the soil were as great as their actual properties, and had such well-known names as Don José Martinez de Hoz for president, Mr. Richard Newton for vice-president, Don Eduardo Olivera for secretary, and Don Ramon Viton for treasurer. Although the growth of the *Sociedad Rural* has continued until it has become a national institution of the first importance, its work and aims have remained unchanged from the date of its inception to the present day. As the patron and encouraging body of all invention and scientific innovation that promises to aid the welfare of the land, it has acted throughout in a spirit of generosity that has befitted the vastness of the growing industries with which it has had to deal. It is, moreover, largely due to the work the society has effected that the standard of breed in all the various branches of live-stock continues as high as is the case to-day.

As to the active organisation of the body, the evidences of this are everywhere. From the management of the great cattle and horse shows to the compiling of stud and herd books, the work of the society is comprehensive to a degree. As an instance

of what it has effected, it may be said that the first shipment to Europe in 1876 of Argentine frozen meat was conducted under the auspices of the *Sociedad Rural*. It is true that, owing to defects in the system as it was then understood, the initial venture did not prove a success. Yet the subsequent flourishing of the industry fully justified the support that the society had lent to it; for the benefits that have accrued to Argentina from the frozen meat traffic are almost incalculable. This, however, affords only one instance of the many ways in which the *Sociedad Rural* has served pastoral and agricultural interests.

To come to a general review of the story of Argentine live-stock, it is evident that its history has endured for some three centuries and a half. In the first place it is concerned with the hordes of creatures that, reverted many grades back towards their primitive state, tramped the wild grasses of the *campo*, unkempt, shaggy, to fight their own battles, and thus acquire an unwelcome degree of mere sinew at the expense of the flesh of commerce! At the last stage we see other companies, more numerous yet, that resemble the first as little as does the sheep the goat. Great, proud, sleek creatures, for whose parents the agricultural districts of Europe have been ransacked in order that they might yield up the cream of whatever species they had to offer; the mass of the Durhams, Herefords, Polled-Angus, Clydesdales, Hackneys, thoroughbreds, Lincolns, Leicesters, Romney Marsh, and all the rest—to throw the various

breeds together—is now of a type so high as scarcely to be equalled elsewhere in the world.

As for the surroundings, they have changed as much as the beasts. In the latest patterns of stables and sheds, with trees especially planted for their shelter, with windmill pumps to draw water for them, and with specially sown grasses and the rich green waves of alfalfa for their fodder—the most costly and aristocratic of the four-footed newcomers is wont to settle down in great content, prepared to do his duty by the land.

CHAPTER XII

BUENOS AIRES

Transformation of the Capital—Its Present Status—A Lively Town—Some Topographical Features—Notable Parks and Buildings—The New House of Congress—The Edifice and its Environment—Electoral Procedure—Restaurants and Hotels—Recent Enterprise—The Teatro Colon—The Avenida de Mayo—*La Prensa* and its Offices—Argentine Journalism—The *Nacion*, *Argentino*, and *Diario*—The Avenida Alvear—A Magnificent Thoroughfare—The Recoleta—The Home of the Famous Dead—Aspect of the Streets of Tombs.

MUCH has been written of Buenos Aires in recent years. The growing cosmopolitan town whose population has already attained to a million and a quarter must therefore present a less nebulous picture to the minds of many who had been wont to picture the place as a mere chance collection of buildings on the banks of the La Plata. Designed in square blocks throughout, the side of each square holding exactly its hundred numbers, the convenient pattern of the capital has been consistently retained. The metamorphosis that has brought the place to the front rank of the world's cities is evident in elaboration rather than in radical change. The area of public gardens and avenues has increased; houses

have been enlarged and heightened, and the streets have been broadened wherever the feat has been possible.

Thus it was not necessary for the new city to destroy the old and, phœnix-like, to rise up from the ashes. The modern buildings and arteries have been grafted steadily upon a living town. The result of the process is that one who knew his Buenos Aires a dozen years ago could still find his way with ease about the place, and yet, but for the names of the streets and the actual ramification of the routes, would be pacing amidst utterly unfamiliar and strange surroundings. For the difference resembles that between the traversing of sapling plantations and that of the same country when covered with mature forest trees.

The soporific element enters not in the least into the constitution of Buenos Aires. On the contrary, the chief characteristic of the city is to be found in its abounding vitality. Tram-cars, public and private victorias, motor-cars, and bicycles pass in endless and rapid procession through the central parts of the town ; upon the footpaths the pedestrians throng in the accustomed fashion of great urban centres, while the theatres, restaurants, cafés, and tea-rooms are crowded to overflowing. Indeed, the city is abreast of the times in every conceivable respect. It is no exaggeration to say that the latest innovation in London or Paris finds an immediate response in the heart of Buenos Aires. Argentina's

capital is no place for young men with 'ideas' that have failed to fructify in Europe.

I have referred to the central streets as being the busiest. The term central, however, must be taken in its metaphorical rather than its geographical sense. The commercial and shopping neighbourhood is in the extreme south of the town, while the fashionable avenues and boulevards run up north from this, parallel with the shore of the river, to Palermo and Belgrano. It is within this radius that the majority of the principal buildings are situated. Thus the panorama of the town as viewed from the yellow waters of the La Plata has altered in proportion to the modification of the buildings. In the place of the line of lowly flat roofs, that gave little indication of what lay beneath and about them, now rise domes and spires, and the lofty cubes of sky-scraper buildings. The change is all for the better, and—since no exaggeration yet marks the sky-scrapers—the broken horizon is eloquent of the embellishment of the capital.

Since this work lays no claim to the exhaustive details of the guide-book, I will pass over the topographical details of Buenos Aires as rapidly as possible. With open spaces the capital is generously furnished. Indeed, the plazas have grown steadily both in number and beauty. Of these the Plaza de Mayo, flanked by the cathedral and government buildings, is the most central and prominent. But the category of the remainder is sufficiently large.

BUENOS AIRES : PLAZA DE MAYO

The Plazas of San Martin, Vicente Lopez, Constitucion, Once Setiembre, Libertad, the outer gardens of the Recoleta, the Plaza de Julio, and the spreading Parque Cristobal Colon by the riverside in the neighbourhood of the docks—these constitute but a small proportion of the entire category of the central gardens. All are exceedingly pleasant places, laid out with taste in flowers and palms, and shaded for the most part by acacia and paraiso trees. Indeed, the yellow blossoms of the former and the mauve of the latter give the keynote to much of the Buenos Aires summer colouring. So much for the central plazas; the great outer parks deserve a special mention further on.

The municipal buildings of the capital are on a par with the rest. The Government House, Law Courts, public buildings in general, and the cathedral in a lesser degree, are imposing and suitable to the national requirements. The latest and most notable is undoubtedly the new House of Congress, situated at the western extremity of the Avenida de Mayo, an imposing structure with a lofty, slender, marble dome that dominates the city. Externally, the building is not yet complete, as the greater part of the brick walls have yet to be covered with marble, and to receive their decorative complement of statues and ornamentation. A portion of the interior, too, is still in the hands of the masons and carpenters; but the majority of the waiting-rooms, libraries, and private apartments are now finished. The dignity

of these rivals that of the Congress Chambers themselves. The larger of the halls accommodates the 120 deputies of the Republic; the smaller is designed for the thirty members of the senate. Both chambers are semi-circular in form, with furniture and decorations that are severely rich—if such a term be permissible—and, consequently, impressive. The acoustic of the chamber of deputies unfortunately leaves something to be desired.

Upon the completion of the entire scheme in connexion with the House of Congress, the building will undoubtedly gain infinitely in appearance from the improvement in its surroundings. In order to provide a suitable environment, the numerous rows of houses that now exist in the near neighbourhood of the new and stately building are to be demolished wholesale. Thus the great white marble edifice with its towering dome will be in a better case than so many of its brethren in Europe, whose lower flanks are encroached upon and obliterated, except at a distance of a few yards, by a sea of small and incongruous buildings.

It may be as well to explain here that the President of Argentina is elected for a term of six years by the representatives of the fourteen provinces. The senators are also chosen by restricted suffrage; the deputies, however, are called into being by the direct vote of the people. An indispensable qualification for the office of senator is to have possessed Argentine citizenship for not less than six years;

the equivalent qualification for that of deputy is a citizenship of four years.

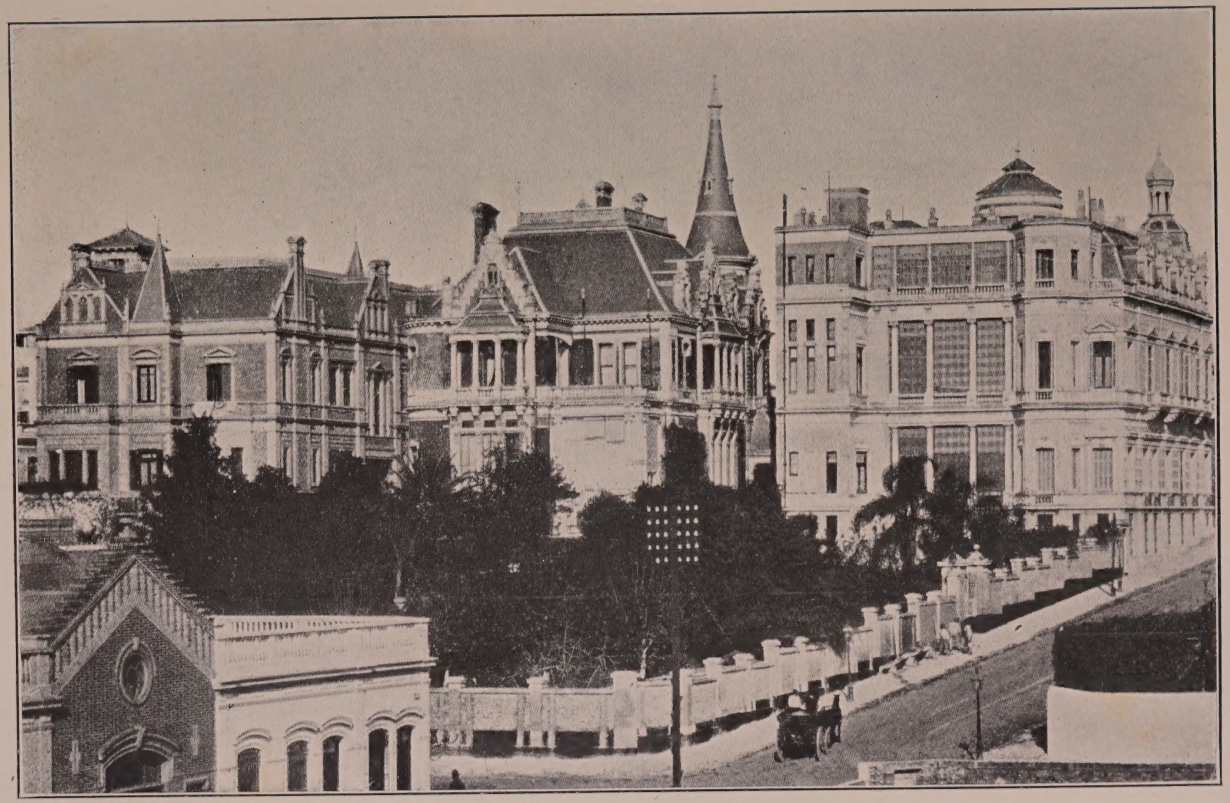
To turn to the private buildings, many of those of the banks in the streets of San Martin, Bartolomé Mitre, and Reconquista compare favourably with similar offices in the chief towns of Europe. The restaurants are comparatively small in size ; that is to say, so far as concerns the establishments proper, of which the best are 'Charpentier's,' 'the Sportsman,' and 'Monsch's,' all of which are excellent. A period of transition, however, has of late come to the haunts of dining. With the uprising of large and brand-new hotels, the restaurants of these modern caravanserais have, in the natural course of events, been thrown open to the public. The result has been a notable broadening in the horizon of the dining world with the institution of the large and elaborate rooms of the Plaza and Palace Hotels, and the exceptionally spacious restaurant of the Hotel Paris in the Avenida de Mayo.

The institution of the Plaza and Palace Hotels has now adequately furnished the capital with probably the only attribute with which it had long remained insufficiently supplied. The Plaza is the latest, largest, and most sumptuous—in brief, it is a hotel that will bear comparison with almost any in the world. From the roof promenade on the summit of the lofty block a really magnificent panorama of the town is to be obtained, whence the pattern of the level spread of buildings is clearly defined between the

border line of the yellow La Plata, with its docks and shipping on the one hand, and the green woods of Palermo and Belgrano on the other. The Palace Hotel, the forerunner of the Plaza, although not quite so large, stands as a formidable rival to the later institution, and is provided with a particularly tasteful roof garden: a pleasant spot that constitutes a fashionable dining resort in the summer. Other hotels of note are the Paris, Grand, Phœnix, Royal, and a host of others of lesser degree.

Of the theatres, the finest is undoubtedly the Teatro Colon in the Plaza Lavalle. The structure has only recently been completed, and the great Grecian building is exceptionally happy in being set amidst gardens that permit the edifice to be seen at its best. It is to this dramatic haven, amongst the rest, that journey many of the most famous artistes in the world, since the Argentine, with no little wisdom, is loth to be satisfied with any but these.

The most central and noted avenue of the town is, of course, the Avenida de Mayo. This very spacious and imposing thoroughfare stretches between the Plaza de Mayo on the one hand, and the new Congress Buildings on the other. The Avenida is consistently furnished with a fine type of building. It now contains many hotels, and one edifice that ranks in splendour with almost any in the city—the offices of the journal *La Prensa*. The paper is certainly worthy of its palatial setting, since it is the most important in South America. Furnished not only



BUENOS AIRES: MODERN RESIDENCES

with the very latest models of printing installation, but with a formidable literary staff and an especially comprehensive system of news service as well, the *Prensa* is a very powerful and admirable organ. It is necessary in these days to judge the weight of a newspaper by the price of its advertisement spaces. Surveyed from this practical point of view, the *Prensa* stands on a level with the first flight of the London publications. Another paper of a high rank is the *Nacion*, an organ famous for its literary articles, while a journal of more recent origin is the *Argentino*. The chief evening paper is the *Diario*, while two very excellent illustrated productions are to be met with in the *Illustración Sud Americana* and the humorous *Caras y Caretas*.

Although to the casual visitor the Avenida de Mayo stands as the most familiar of all Buenos Aires thoroughfares, it has in reality numerous rivals in the way of boulevards, whose claims to distinction are almost equally high. One avenue, indeed, the Alvear, undoubtedly surpasses the central artery in many respects. Leading through the most fashionable quarter of the capital to Palermo Park, the roadway itself is incomparably the broadest and best engineered of all. Lined throughout with masses of flowering trees and palms, flanked wherever possible by stretches of public garden, the Avenida may be counted on to impress the eye to no small degree. It is flanked, moreover, by the finest residences in Buenos Aires—palatial mansions,

surrounded by gardens that in summer give out a blaze of roses and bougainvillea—until the first stretches of the outer park put an end to the houses.

At the central end of the Avenida Alvear, approached by a handsome stretch of shaded gardens, is the Recoleta, known by many as the Westminster Abbey of Buenos Aires. The comparison is not in the least accurate in a physical sense, since the Recoleta, far from being a cathedral, is composed of a collection of many hundreds of chapels and tombs in which the notable dead of Argentina lie. It is a town of the defunct that strangely resembles one of the living. Intersected by parallel stone streets with the tombs for houses on either side, the spectacular effect of the Recoleta is solemn and impressive. The vista is purely of stone, granite, and marble, broken only here and there by the green foliage of a palm or of a cypress tree. As to the buildings of the chapels themselves that surmount the tombs, they vary from an imposing erection, pillared and domed, of the size of an ordinary small cottage to a comparatively miniature tomb some half-dozen feet in height and width.

The majority, owned by families, are fitted with stone recesses for the reception of each member's coffin. In many of the more lofty ones the recesses are so arranged as to front the street; the upper tiers, occupied, being closed with slabs of stone, the lower still open and expectant. There is undoubtedly matter for thought here on the part of

BUENOS AIRES: THE RECOLETA

CHAPTER XIII

BUENOS AIRES (*continued*)

Some Traffic Difficulties—The Coming of the 'Tube'—Tramway System—The Motor-cab and its Driver—Daring of the Chauffeur—Philosophic Cabmen—The *Cochero* and his Views—Original Workings of Vehicular Tariff—Some Points of Law and Driving—Palermo Race-course—The Grand Stands—General Aspects of the Course—The Queen of Race-grounds—The Jockey Club—A Magnificent Institution—Some Unique Features of the Building—English Clubs—Hurlingham—A Comprehensive Contest—The Tigre River—Regattas—Their Popularity—Cosmopolitan Racing—The *Dia de Modo*—Its Exigencies—The Zoological Gardens.

THE congestion of the Buenos Aires central streets has now attained to rather a serious pitch. In the afternoons the traffic along the most frequented of these is only permitted in one direction, and a large black arrow painted at the street corners signifies the way that the automobiles and horse-drawn vehicles must go. The obvious inconveniences of this system I have already touched upon in a previous work, yet it appears the only solution of the traffic problem as it now stands. More thorough remedies are being contemplated, it is true, and, indeed, are already being effected where it is possible to bring them into being. In many directions the old, narrow

streets have been demolished and fresh avenues created, much to the convenience and beautifying of the particular districts affected. But many of the central arteries have unavoidably remained with their actual area unenlarged so far, and buildings of ever-increasing magnificence have risen steadily to confront each other across streets whose width remain the same as before.

There is, in consequence, much talk of tubes and similar subterranean delvings. Indeed, various concrete schemes have already been brought to bear on the subject, but so far no active steps have been taken in this direction. Even when the new and necessary central avenues are opened out it is unlikely that the capital will remain for long with its alluvial soil untunnelled.

The Buenos Aires tramway service attained a very efficient condition some years ago, and the system has now been considerably extended and further improved. For the equivalent of twopence it is possible to journey from the outskirts of the city on one side to those on the other, an expedition that involves some half-dozen miles. It is almost needless to mention that none but electric cars are employed, and that the enterprise is conducted on lines as up-to-date as all else in the capital.

It is equally a matter of course that the motor-cab has come to take its place amidst the general traffic of the city. The public chauffeur here is a

person of distinctly dashing propensities. In fact, it may be laid down as an axiom that no one who suffers in the slightest degree from nerves should enter a Buenos Aires motor-cab! In justice to the driver it must be said that accidents occur with an astonishing and pleasing rarity. It is best to make an effort to bear this in mind when seated in the conveyance, and to take comfort from cold fatality statistics each time that the flying wheels shave a passing object with a couple of inches to spare. The art of automobile driving seems to come naturally to those of Latin stock, as is evidenced in other parts of the world as well as here. Certainly none could deny the expert qualities of the Buenos Aires public chauffeur. Were he but one shade less master of his craft, splinters and confusion would sit heavily upon the streets of the capital. As it is, chaos is confined to the mind of the passenger, and ends with the inevitable sigh of relief that marks the happy ending of the journey.

Cabmen of the horse variety are much the same all the world over. I have described a few of the Buenos Aires Jehu's peculiarities in another book, and his objections to the unprofitable long-distance passenger. Since that time of writing I have gained a more intimate acquaintance with his tribe, and his peculiarities well repay cultivation. So far as the cruder ethics of his profession are concerned, his fares are naturally as elastic as he can make them. The trait is ubiquitous; it is

BUENOS AIRES: ASPECT OF RIVER FRONT PREVIOUS TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF DOCKS

the methods of the procedure that verge on the sublime.

The Buenos Aires *cochero* is many things at once. Amongst these he combines the temperaments of a philosopher, an actor, and an artist. His attitude as he reposes on his box is peaceful, but genially autocratic. One may approach him with a request to drive a distance that, granted a generous traveller, may be productive of a dollar. The demand brings a look of self-commiseration to his face. Then he will speak his ultimatum.

'To-day the charge will be two dollars, señor.'

'Why?'

He points an explanatory finger in the direction of the blue sky.

'Because, señor, it is very hot!'

Or it may be that he feels in need of lunch at the moment. A man must eat! The fine for preventing him is a dollar added to the price of the drive.

He may, again, have driven out in the early hours of the morning to await the advent of a long-distance train. Should the express be unduly belated he remains undisturbed since he is a philosopher. He merely visits the shortcomings of the railway upon the passenger. He has come down punctually to meet the train, and has been kept waiting for an hour and more. Therefore the charge will be twice what it would have been an

hour and more ago! No, he admits, it is not the señor's fault; but then neither is it his. He shrugs his shoulders in non-committal sympathy. If the señor, he suggests in genial thoughtfulness, would prefer to try some other *cochero*——. But the other *cocheros*, when tested, are found to be imbued with precisely similar financial views. In the circumstances the logic is unanswerable, and the cab drives off with the 'fare' inside and a smile on the face of the driver!

There is a remedy, however, for this cheerful tyranny. It is simple enough at the start to call in the aid of a policeman, and to invoke the regulations, before the might of which the cabman's theories fall like a shattered house of cards to the ground. In the minds of the unscrupulous an even simpler method is to agree at once to the charges, and then to pay the legal fare at the end of the journey, a flagrantly immoral procedure against which the *cochero* has no remedy! Indeed, even the first system is deprecated by many as being no part of the 'game' in view of the pleasant audacity with which the driver is wont to 'bluff' in the face of such legal odds and discouraging possibilities. Judged as a species, the Buenos Aires cabman is by no means a bad fellow.

Perhaps the less said about the *cochero's* driving the better. He is accustomed to handle the reins much as though he were steering a sixteen-foot boat in a gale of wind. When he bumps his vehicle

into that of a brother artist it is very seldom that any recrimination follows. On either side there may be a shrugging of shoulders, or even smiles. In any case the matter is too everyday an affair to be worthy of a dispute with a fellow human being. The whip descends a little more heavily upon the horses' backs, that is all.

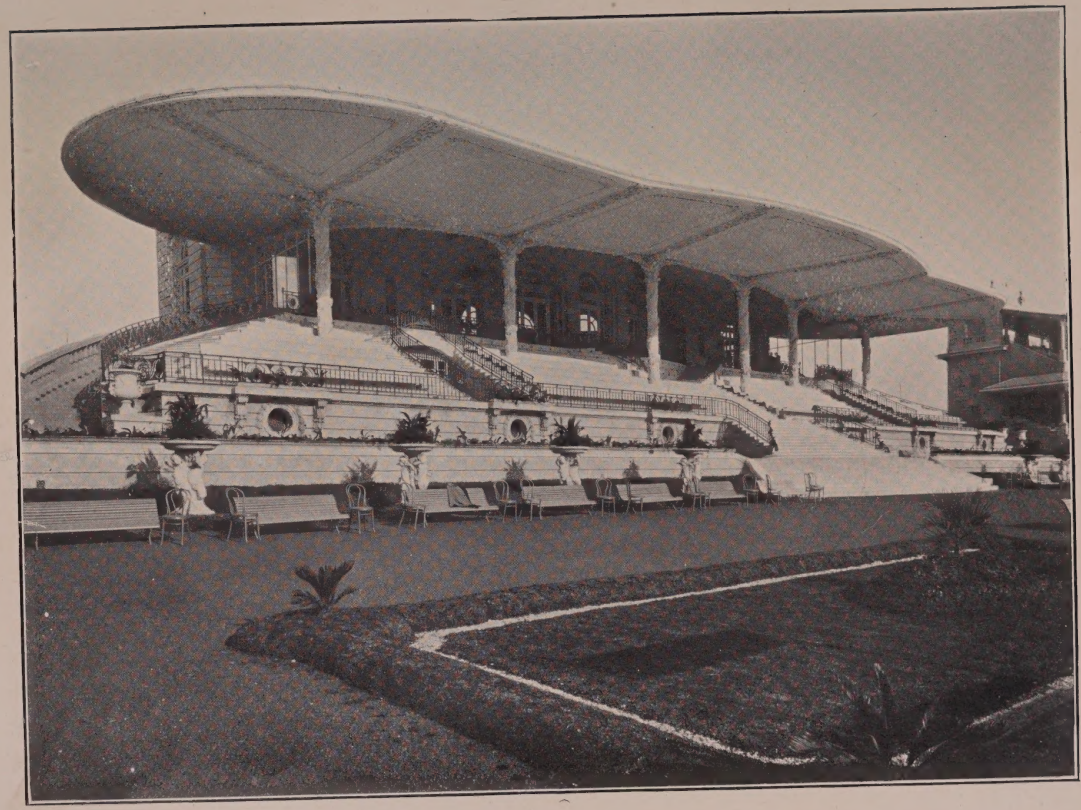
The journey to Palermo on a race-day brings out his sporting instincts to the utmost. Once clear of the main streets and on the broad stretch of the splendid Avenida Alvear, a thousand minor contests occur between the cab-horses on the road ere the magnificent park and the ground of the official races is reached. To all appearances as numerous as grains of sand, the light victorias go swaying furiously along, outpacing the more dignified and stylish private vehicles. And all the while the motors come flashing up to the front with a snort, a hiss, and a puff, to mark the moment of their passage as they plough their way through the press like greyhounds through a company of rabbits. Indeed, on the day of a fashionable meeting the road to the Palermo race-course is a sight to be seen.

As the topic of the *cochero* has led us to that very pleasant spot, it would be as well to remain there for a while. The precincts of the Hipodromo Argentino are quite sufficiently worthy of attention in themselves. The great white stands and the lengthy series of the other buildings that go to

make up the comprehensive scheme of the whole are said—and I should imagine with reason—to be the finest in the world. The effect of the entire row of these spotless erections is astonishingly fine. The pick of these, naturally enough, is the stand of the Jockey Club itself. The great edifice is of white marble beneath—and in many places the material is employed throughout—rising in its tiers until it is capped by a spreading and very graceful roof. Extending from the back of the topmost steps is a spacious promenade where the array of tea-tables is wont to be set, and behind this, again, are large club-rooms most admirably furnished.

For one who is sufficiently fortunate to possess the *entrée* to the place, the Jockey Club stand is the most pleasant place of all from which to view the course and the enclosure within the white rails of the track itself. In order that nothing shall be left undone, the centre itself of the track has been beautified to match the rest. The little streams that intersect the place are spanned by dainty white bridges; flower-beds, moreover, abound in a spot that, in the case of the majority of race-courses, is left comparatively neglected.

The outskirts of the paddock and the ground in the neighbourhood of the stands is naturally laid out with a still greater elaboration. Dazzling white buildings of great dimensions, eucalyptus, pines,



PALERMO RACE COURSE: THE MEMBERS' STAND

palms, turf, flowers, canvas-sheltered chairs on the members' lawn, costumes post-haste from Paris, an excellent band, and the passing to and fro of dense crowds—such is more or less the general *coup d'œuil* of the Palermo race-ground on the occasion of an important meeting. As a matter of course, the racing is of a distinguished order. English and American jockeys, however, afford the exception instead of the rule, the riders in nearly every case being Argentine.

On such an occasion, too, the broad, shaded avenues of Palermo Park that border the course afford a spectacle of their own that is quite as interesting in its way as the sight within. In the centre of the roadway waits an imposing row of tram-cars, specially set aside for the purposes of the day; at the side are lines of vehicles drawn up in review order, wheel to wheel. With motor-cars, private carriages, and public conveyances all distributed in separate and distinct sections according to the classification of each, it is possible to walk for a mile, and still to find the line of conveyances, guarded by the white-uniformed mounted policemen, extending itself at apparently interminable length. Should the visitor have arrived in a hired cab, it would be no friend of his who would advise him to cope single-handed with the situation as he emerges from the course. On the contrary, let him do anything rather than despise the services of a very cheery little ally who will almost undoubtedly proffer

his services. In short, let him give the number of his vehicle to one of the small boys who, armed with ostrich-feather brushes, wage war on dusty boots. Once furnished with this knowledge, the youngster will dive recklessly amidst the serried masses of horses and wheels, and in an incredibly short while will return in triumph within the desired vehicle.

If the Palermo races stand for a national institution of general popularity, the house of the Jockey Club itself in Buenos Aires is equally national in its importance, although, of course, far more restricted in its direct interests. In the Jockey Club is centred not only the wealth of Argentina, but the best society of the nation. Of the house itself it is difficult to speak without, perhaps, an undue degree of enthusiasm. Mere luxury in itself may be of little account; but as an attempt to fulfil certain well-defined requirements, the place undoubtedly approaches a quite unusual degree of perfection.

In many respects the Jockey Club stands alone amongst its kind throughout the world. There is a danger of verging on the wearisome in speaking continually of 'the finest in the world.' Yet, even without alluding to its exceptional features, the more ordinary attributes of the place lay claim to this title—and undoubtedly with reason. For a fitting description of the entrance-hall, with its marbles, an artist or an architect or even—by no

means an impossibility—a combination of both would be necessary, and much the same applies to the main apartments and the chief dining-room.

But the complete organisation of an ordinary club forms only a portion of the numerous properties of this very splendid home. A great fencing-hall, gymnasium, Turkish baths, roof-gardens—these are only some of the attributes of the place. For a combination of quiet splendour and taste I think the palm must go to some of the smaller private dining-rooms that are at the member's disposal for special entertainments. For the furnishing of one of these, by the way, the appointments of a similar chamber in an old French château were brought over wholesale.

I will say no more about the Jockey Club, since the tenor of the description would become monotonous, and would too much resemble the inevitable ejaculations of the visitor or honorary member who is shown around the building for the first time—a series of 'splendids!' given out in various keys. The quiet magnificence of the building is less to be wondered at when the income of the institution from its race-course and the percentage on the *pari mutuel* is taken into account. I have this from the lips of several of the most prominent members, whose names in themselves compel the most implicit belief. But I will not state the sum here. It leaves even one accustomed to Argentine

finance a little breathless. Therefore I will buy freedom from possible incredulity on the part of others at the price of complete reticence—which throws the onus of blackmail upon the reader.

The English clubs of Buenos Aires, by the way, are the 'Strangers' and the 'English,' both extremely pleasant and well-managed institutions. In the suburb of Lomas is a third, but smaller, English club, equally fortunate in its ethics. The principal centre of British sport, however, is Hurlingham, a club situated some dozen miles from the town, that is comprehensive to a degree, since it contains a race-course, polo-ground, cricket-ground, tennis-courts, swimming-baths, and, in fact, almost every possible feature of the kind in addition to a very excellent club-house. The membership is now large, and the institution in a flourishing state. In the less prosperous days of yore it was held together by a devoted band, one of the most prominent of which was Mr. F. W. Clunie, who is well known, not only for his interest in sport, but for his acquaintance with the remoter parts of the Republic. Here is the programme of a contest that goes to show that, in virility at least, the old days of Hurlingham could produce feats that it would be difficult to exceed from an 'all-round' point of view at any time or place. Mr. Clunie, it should be said, was one of the competitors in this very comprehensive struggle. I reproduce the programme as it was drawn up at the time.

THE JOCKEY CLUB: ENTRANCE HALL

GREAT SPORTING EVENT

ON

1st November 1892,

BETWEEN TWO MEMBERS OF THE HURLINGHAM CLUB,

TO COMMENCE AT 9.30 A.M.

1. Bat Fives—best of 3 games.
2. Racquets—best of 3 games.
3. Lawn Tennis—best of 3 sets.
4. Foot Race—one round, cinder track.
5. Pony Race—one round, race-course.
6. Boxing—5 rounds, 3 minutes; 1 minute time.
7. Fencing—best of 3 points.
8. Cricket—single wicket.
9. Quoits—best of 3 games of 15.
10. Golf—9 holes.
11. Shooting—7 pigeons.
12. Billiards—best of 3 games of 100.

The competition was faithfully carried out, and each event closely contested.

With the great increase in the number of motor launches the Tigre river, known—with more reason than applies to the majority of such similes—as 'the Thames of Buenos Aires,' has gained still more in popularity. The great network of rivers generally included beneath this name that flow amidst the trees, peach-orchards, and flowers of

the smiling banks afford, indeed, an ideal spot for boating, since one may travel for days along the innumerable streams and watery lanes without ever of necessity traversing the same channel twice. Here, in addition to the mahogany skiff, the neat sailing craft, and the hundreds of motor launches, the vessels of the country abound, their great spread of canvas and brightly painted hulls lending a picturesque and welcome foil to the lengthy procession of the more orthodox boats.

Regattas on the Tigre have become almost unduly fashionable. Indeed, the principal rowing function of last season suffered not a little from an overdose of popularity. The sight was certainly an interesting one—*c'était magnifique, mais pas la guerre!* The stream of steam launches, motor vessels, sailing craft, and rowing boats, that came pouring inwards without cease from east and west, was looked upon with equanimity in the first instance. When great ocean-going tugs, river passenger steamers, and similar leviathans, all profusely decorated for the occasion, came steaming majestically to the spot, there rose a gasp of dismay from all who occupied the more fragile vessels. But the giants, not to be denied, caught hold of the shore, and remained. When a few dozen had gathered together there the sight they afforded was impressive, if curious. Their decks in the first place stood high above the level of the bank, and the tall, variously coloured funnels thrust themselves resolutely upwards amidst

the topmost branches of the willows, carelessly caressing the protesting leaves with light coils of smoke.

There was much excuse for these craft, it is true, inasmuch as their decks were littered with very graceful forms and the white costumes of femininity—the phraseology is perhaps a little loose here; but it is surely unnecessary to explain that these human and material attributes were indissolubly joint. Nevertheless the lodging of these, and of the bunting and flowers as well, pushed the lines of smaller craft further and further out into the centre of the river, and the regatta course in proportion grew beautifully less and more thread-like with the passage of each hour.

From the rowing point of view the result materialised in a series of minor disasters, although the majority of the earlier races passed off well enough. Alas for British oarsmanship as at present displayed on the Tigre! Our success was strictly moderate. Entered for only one of the numerous events, the single English crew that competed finished a good last in their own particular race. And the Tigre Boat Club that furnished it, the oldest established upon the river, is a club of traditions that holds a brilliant record, not only for early performances, but in the more immediate past as well. The present phase is disconcerting, to say the least of it. Were it not for a conviction that it is ephemeral, the situation would give cause for more active unease concerning national stamina.

On the other hand, it is consoling to reflect that there were many English amongst the Argentine and cosmopolitan crews who were the first to pass the post, and that the challenge sculls were won by an Englishman. The sting here, such as it is, lies not in defeat, but in a want of endeavour that involves a slackness in the ethics of training.

The *Dia de Modo* is an institution that has become deep-rooted in Buenos Aires. The 'fashionable day' now applies to almost every form of social amusement that is of the permanent order. The newcomer may wonder, for instance, why it should be that an afternoon tea resort should be crowded to overflowing with gaily-dressed ladies and their attendants on the one day when the next will see the place empty of all but a few persons, and those of obviously less exalted social rank. The explanation, of course, is that the first day constituted a *Dia de Modo*, while the second did not.

The custom extends to restaurants, promenades in the parks, and even to race-meetings, as well as to many other functions of the kind. It need scarcely be said that the phase has been brought about by the ladies! They have made the law a rigorous one moreover. A *Dia de Modo* may be missed with impunity; but it is purely lamentable to be on view at one of these spots whose particular precincts have been officially banned for the day. Perhaps the ladies have been wise in their generation. If only as a proof of their possibilities in the way

THE JOCKEY CLUB: A PRIVATE DINING-ROOM

of mere ornamentation, the system works admirably. The contrast in the aspect of any such spot upon a day that *is* and a *dies non* is quite sufficient in itself. In fact it affords a yet further justification for feminine existence.

During summer the very pleasant custom exists of driving out to Palermo Park of an evening after the dinner function. Once within the park itself the spectacle is a fascinating one on such an occasion. The avenues amidst the palms, eucalyptus, and poplar trees are thronged with vehicles to such an extent that, although the rows of these are frequently more than half a dozen deep, a walking pace is inevitable. The thousands of carriage lights moving slowly between the broader illuminations of the shaded avenues themselves lend to the scene an appearance of gaiety difficult to be surpassed.

The grounds of the admirably managed zoological gardens in the park here constitute a favourite resort for the populace on a Sunday. The behaviour of the folk as they stroll to and fro between the numerous haunts of the beasts is notably dignified and exemplary. One of the chief amusements of the younger folk is the riding of the tame llamas that are led up and down the shaded avenues. For those who desire more rapid motion there are two miniature trains, with carriages a couple of feet in height that each hold two or three persons, and the engines of which go puffing busily through the very extensive gardens.

CHAPTER XIV

BUENOS AIRES AS AN INDUSTRIAL CENTRE

Commercial Influences of the Capital—The Evidence of Industries—International and Local Commerce—Various Branches of Trade—The *Mataderos*—Scenes at the Killing Centre—Aspect of the Yards—A Cattle Auction—Methods of Sale—Chilled and Frozen Meat—The Compañia Sansinena—Past and Present Importance of the Industry—Science as Applied to Trade—Improvements Effected—The Milk Supply of the Capital—Itinerant Cows—The Manufacture of Bags—Assiduous Workpeople.

BUENOS AIRES, with its fine town area well policed, cared for, and clean, constitutes a favourable social centre in every respect. Nevertheless, as may be imagined, the town is not merely a centre of clubs, theatres, and general entertainments, including the now inevitable rinking establishments. As a place of commerce, and as a magnet that attracts the great and various products, the importance of the capital is such that its industrial fluctuations find a prompt echo in the markets of Europe and Northern America.

The natural evidence of this commercial status is to be met with in its great and ever-swelling lines of docks, its teeming business quarter with the great banks and mercantile offices, its meat-chilling

establishments, its grain storehouses and elevators, its special pedigree stockyards tucked away in the heart of the city, its huge central produce market on the banks of the Riachuelo, and in many similar institutions.

The meat-freezing industry is well represented in Buenos Aires, not only in the matter of transit and shipment, but also as regards the *frigorificos* established at the spot. These, however, deserve a later and fuller reference to themselves.

As a centre for fruit, the capital has now become of no little importance. In addition to the peaches, pears, melons, figs, strawberries, and the numerous other species of temperate climes that flourish in its own neighbourhood, it is amply supplied with the sub-tropical fruits that come down the river from Corrientes, and even from Paraguay, while from the southern provinces it obtains many of the growths that are wont to flourish in Northern Europe. In the vintage season special trains, laden exclusively with grapes, hasten eastwards from Mendoza; thus, having the products of three climates more or less at hand, Buenos Aires is far more fortunately situated than the majority of towns. Curiously enough, however, the fruit-canning industry has not made the progress that might have been expected from it. Locally, it flourishes to no small degree, but no serious attempt at exportation has yet been made. The same applies to the important sugar production of the north.

Such industries, therefore, as those of fruit, fishery, and the like, are necessarily confined in scope for the present. With butter the case is different, since that commodity is now shipped with some regularity. Nevertheless, by the side of the great produce of cereals and cattle, the remaining industries cannot fail to fall far into the background.

The *Mataderos* at Flores, some dozen miles distant from the centre of the capital, represents in one sense the heart of the pastoral industry of the country. It is the receptacle into which flow the majority of the arteries that conduct the live-stock—to their death. But it is more than a slaughtering centre; it is the chief mart where the herds of incoming cattle are put up to auction and sold in order to supply the capital with its meat.

The early morning is the most favourable time to visit the *Mataderos*, since the principal business of the place is wont to be concluded long ere the sun is high in the heavens. When bound for the spot, the streets (for houses now fringe almost the entire route) give more and more evidence of the nature of the destination as it is approached. Long strings of carts, all making for the central town, pass by with increasing frequency, until the procession becomes practically unbroken. They are the meat carts, these lofty, closed vehicles, specially adapted for the purpose, and subject to stringent regulations and inspection.

ON THE TIGRE RIVER

Once at the *Mataderos*, the first impressions of the great extent of buildings, yards, and railed-off spaces is a little confusing. Within the shadow of the huge sheds men, plentifully daubed with red, are trundling meat-laden trucks and barrows to and fro, while water hoses play upon the concrete floor, and, beyond, in the yards, the cattle are still falling in scores to the knife. From the level of the floor, however, no conception of the extent of the *Mataderos* is possible. In order to ascertain this it is necessary to mount one of the ladders that leads to a narrow gangway raised a dozen feet or so from the ground. Once upon this, one can peer within the covered spaces, and obtain at the same time a view of the tremendous extent of yards and wooden rails that stretch for acres by the side of the main buildings.

It is possible to walk on the gangway itself for an almost interminable while. Its ramifications extend throughout the entire spread of the yards, fringing the heavily-railed spaces, and threading in all directions to dominate the separate 'points' of cattle in their various enclosures. Directly beneath are the hairy backs and tossing horns—a heaving carpet that makes the progress above rather a giddy one to the unaccustomed.

Flanking the yards to the right is a long row of office buildings. From one of them a bell has begun to sound, pealing with an insistent note that suggests the call of a church. But the rites here are strictly carnal; for the song of the clapper is to the effect

that an auction is about to begin. Men are already threading their way along the gangways towards where the various drafts of cattle to be sold await their fate. In a broad passage beneath, that runs parallel with the yards, a strong contingent of riders has mustered. A little later the auctioneer himself has emerged from his office to mount the gangway, and the sale has begun with business-like abruptness.

Indeed, no time is wasted in the procedure. Standing at the head of the pedestrians on the gangway, with the riders opposite, and the cattle in the yard between, the auctioneer explains the animals in a few rapid sentences. Fifty steers from a well-known estancia in Entre Rios! '*Precio rapido!*' Quick bidding is essential! The first offer follows with obliging celerity, and the auctioneer takes it up, singing the last figure of the price. 'Ocho-ocho-och-och-och! Nueve-nueve-ve-ve-ve! Diez-ez-ez-ez-ez!' Until the fall of the hammer the song is ceaseless, accentuated by the variations that mark the rises in the bids.

With the conclusion of the business affecting the first batch there is a hasty progress on the part of all to the enclosure of the next. The pedestrians move in single file along the narrow gangway, while the riders shake up their horses, and the cavalcade proceeds abreast of the rest. Here, and all along the line, the business is concluded with a similar decision and celerity—an eye-opener to those who still accuse Argentina of the ethics of mañana!

When the three or four thousand head of cattle that make up the daily average have been disposed of, and the riders and pedestrians have departed, comes the turn of the *peon*. What could be better fun than chasing the cattle out from these various mazes of the yards, galloping headlong through the intricacies of the narrow passages, with the horse slithering wildly at times upon the slippery concrete of the flooring! It is a happy quarter of an hour for the wild horsemen, a game that brings a pleasurable grin to the hardy face of each.

After the clatter of these hoofs the interior of the great laboratory attached to the place seems strangely tranquil and solemn. The doctors and experts are there, testing some specimens of bovine anatomy. For the watch kept on the meat here at the *Mataderos* is strict in the extreme, and at the faintest suspicion of the possibility of disease the doubtful carcase is marked by the inspectors, and dealt with immediately in the laboratory—which should be a comfortable thought to the good folk of Buenos Aires, whose appetite for meat is certainly no less than that of others.

So far as England is concerned, the system of meat importation has now assumed a greatly increased importance. There are at least two definite reasons for this—the stoppage of the live cattle trade, and the inability of the United States to continue their great shipments of former years. Owing to the present prohibitive law, not a single head now

enters the country of those thousands of Argentine cattle that, until some half-dozen years ago, were wont to be landed and slaughtered at Deptford. As for the United States, of the 25,000 quarters of chilled beef that she formerly sent to England each week, she can now spare no more than a weekly dole of 5000 quarters. Thus the onus of filling this double gap is largely left to Argentine meat.

To what importance this trade has attained will be evident from the fact that during 1909 well over a million quarters of chilled beef were received into England from Argentina. Concerning the details of this industry I am indebted to Mr. John J. Ward for much valuable information. As the European head of the Compañia Sansinena de Carnes Congeladas, the premier company in the trade, and as one who has had practical experience from the beginning of the trade in the United Kingdom, as well as in Argentina and the United States, the seeking of such an opinion as his is undoubtedly an appeal to Caesar.

It was the Compañia Sansinena who, in 1885, dealt with frozen meat from the Argentine. Now, some eight hundred thousand sheep, as well as some three hundred thousand quarters of beef are annually shipped by the company, whose United Kingdom turnover approximates one and three-quarter million pounds. The great enterprise, moreover, has moved with the times. It has been the first to erect a *frigorifico* at Bahia Blanca, where the great Cuatreros edifice, that

BUENOS AIRES: THE PLAZA HOTEL

was built in 1902, now stands. Thus, in addition to its even larger La Negra establishment in Buenos Aires, the company now possesses an outpost to tap the growing flocks and herds of the south.

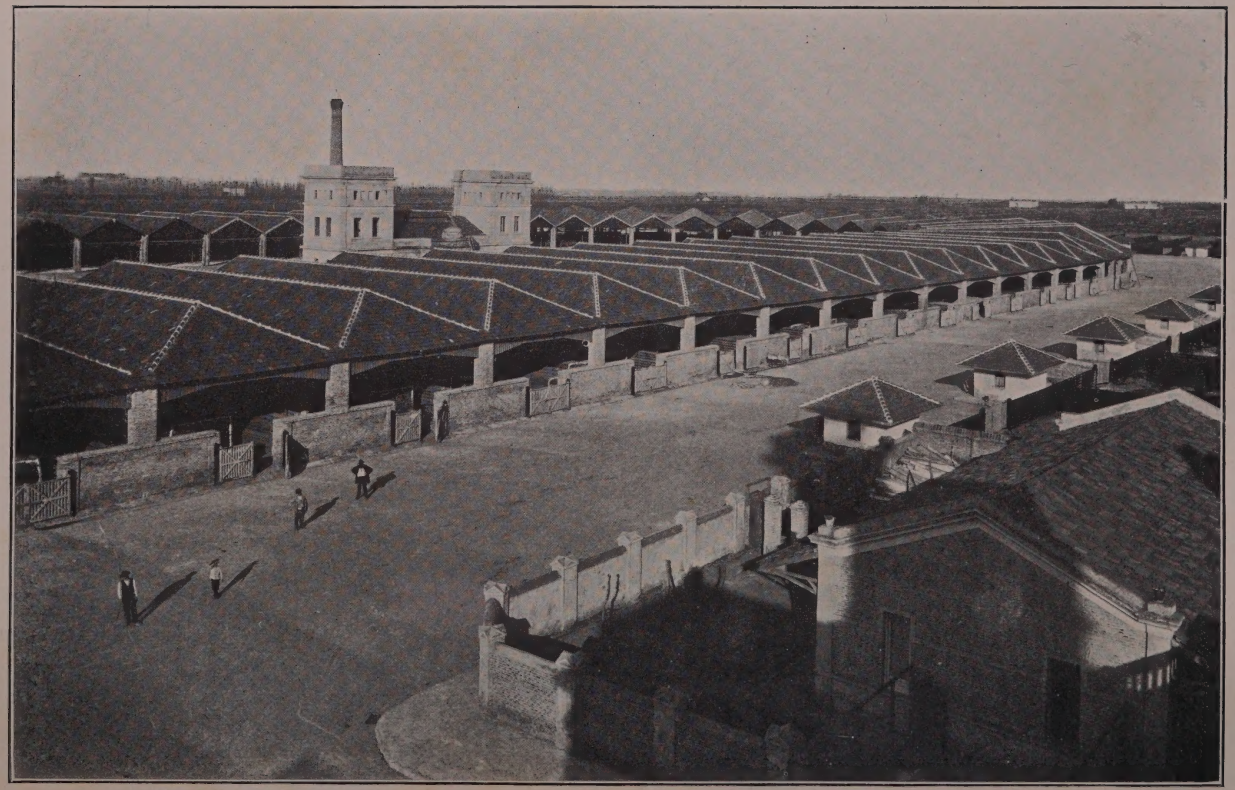
The famous Don Ernesto Tornquist, by the way, was president of the 'Sansinena' until his death last year. The managing director in Argentina is Mr. Miles A. Pasman, who also controls La Curamalan Estancia, and the Bristol Hotel at Mar del Plata. The difference between frozen and chilled meat is perhaps not generally realised, although the matter should not be devoid of interest to a people whom even the most insidious advertisements have not yet beguiled into an all-bean diet. To those who are ignorant of the distinction it may be explained that, while frozen meat is carried in the hold of the steamer at a temperature of fourteen degrees Fahrenheit, chilled meat travels at only two or three degrees beneath freezing point.

The most successful chilled meat of all is that which will remain sound at the highest temperature. But the nearer the point of perfection is approached, it is obvious enough that the less durable will be the life of the meat. In this respect the United States undoubtedly possess certain advantages over Argentina. In the case of the former the time from slaughtering to the butcher's shop in England is fourteen to seventeen days; in that of the latter the time occupied is thirty to forty days. Thus, while a temperature of thirty and a quarter suffices for

the seventeen days, a drop of one or two degrees has been found necessary for the longer period. The difference between the two temperatures, however, is being gradually diminished. In the experiments to this end the Sansinena Company has played its part, and at the present moment the carriage of meat is efficiently effected at twenty-nine degrees. But the end is not yet. Science is more active than ever; the experiments continue, and it may safely be left to the Sansinena and to the other companies involved to advance shortly one more step upon the road to perfection.

The milk supply of the capital, as is explained elsewhere, is now almost entirely in the hands of the Basques. Until the increasing traffic of the central streets put a stop to the practice, it was the custom to bring the cows to the house of each customer, and to milk them on the spot. The method still obtains to a certain extent in the suburbs, although the sight of the cows as they proceed on their rounds is becoming yearly more rare. This system—which somewhat unfairly vests in the cow the duties of carrier as well as those of producer—savours a little of the Oriental. But, although it is common throughout India, the custom has prevailed in many other parts of the world as well—even, I believe, in the outskirts of London less than a century ago.

An industry that has now become firmly established in Buenos Aires is that of bag-making. Thus the wheat, maize, wool, and other products of the



BUENOS AIRES: THE MATADEROS

campo are now enveloped in coverings manufactured in the country itself. There are a number of important factories concerned with the industry, and of these that of Messrs. Gauna and Leitch may be taken as a favourable example. The scene is a busy one here, with a number of women and girls, garbed in special overalls and headgear as a protection against the dusty fluff from the material that pervades the atmosphere, busily at work amidst the whirring of the various machines. Amongst these latter are some capable of effecting five thousand stitches each minute, and others that stamp the finished bags with almost human ingenuity.

One of the most interesting features, however, of this well-managed factory is supplied by the women workers themselves. They stand for industry personified—obviously fretful when their eyes and hands are not occupied by the machines and the bags in the making. Indeed, their employers state that it is but seldom that they permit themselves a holiday on any pretext whatever, although they are fully at liberty to do so. As may be imagined, the secret of this perseverance is not to be looked for in a toil-loving human nature alone. It lies rather in the system of piece-work employed. When it is explained that the normal earnings of each of these girls average one pound a day, the reason for this avidity for work becomes plain enough!

CHAPTER XV

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES

La Plata—Vicissitudes of the Town—Return of Prosperity—A Magnificently Planned City—Rosario—An Important Grain Centre—Urban Improvements—General Progress of Provincial Towns—Córdoba—A University City—The National Observatory—Surroundings of the Town—The Sierra de Córdoba—An Argentine Switzerland—Some Mountain Resorts—Climate of the Range—Mendoza—A Pleasant City—Irrigation of the District—Fruit, Wine, and Poplar Industries—Mar del Plata—A Fashionable Seaside Resort—A Brilliant Season—Aspects of the Spot.

La Plata, the capital of the province of Buenos Aires, is situated upon the bank of the great river. Indeed, its position near the mouth itself makes it the natural port of central Argentina. Such it would doubtless have remained, had not Buenos Aires itself risen up in all its greatness to overwhelm the actual capital of the province. For, as Buenos Aires is the chief city of the Republic, so is La Plata the capital of the province in which the chief city is situated.

With the first real rise of the city of Buenos Aires, La Plata, with all its magnificent design and palatial buildings, declined in proportion, until the grass

A MENDOZA STREET

sprouted up thickly from between the paving stones of the broad avenues and from the crevices of the unfinished cathedral. It became, as a matter of fact, the splendid corpse of a city.

With the universal prosperity that has prevailed of late, however, the fortunes of La Plata have already begun to readjust themselves. Life has sprung up afresh within the place, and the magnificent shell contains once more a living organism. From a commercial point of view there is every likelihood that La Plata will once more take its place amongst the important cities of the Republic. That this should be so is only fitting, for never was a capital designed upon a more lavish scale.

The breadth of the tree-planted avenues, and the stateliness of the public buildings in this resurrected city, is perfectly astonishing. The law courts and municipal buildings are not only vast, but of exceedingly imposing architecture, while the museums are certainly the finest in the country. As a matter of fact, La Plata is seldom visited by the foreign traveller unless business should call him to the spot, and the majority of strangers have no conception of the claims to fame of the town that lies in such close proximity to the capital of the Republic. The place, however, should certainly be seen ; for, apart from its intrinsic interest, it is worthy of study as a specimen of modern town-planning.

As a city Rosario is second in size and importance only to the capital of the Republic. Like many other

of the progressive and mercantile centres its origin is of comparatively recent date, since it cannot claim quite two centuries of active urban existence. Situated on the right bank of the River Paraná, it occupies, from the mercantile point of view, a strategic situation of the highest importance. The centre of a vast grain district, it is, proceeding up stream, the last town upon the great river that has a right to be termed an ocean-going port of the first order. In addition to its water communications, it is served by no less than five lines of railway that link it with Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Tucuman, and thus, directly or indirectly, with almost every district in the country.

The strides that Rosario has made during the past four years are remarkable only when judged by the light of old-world standards. Yet they are very real. For one thing, the town has blossomed afresh into a finer array of houses, avenues, and plazas than it knew before. The port has been enlarged, and is still undergoing a process of aggrandisement. The tramway service—that only recently was dependent on horse traction alone—has been electrified and extended until it has become elevated from a thing of reproach to an enterprise of which the city may well feel proud.

Rosario, busy town as it is, lacks the feverish bustle that is characteristic of Buenos Aires. The streets, however, are pleasant, and essentially modern. Indeed, a comparatively short stay in the spot is

A ROCKY POOL IN THE CÓRDOBA HILLS

apt to be productive of no little reflection. Until recently Buenos Aires stood quite alone in the Republic as regards all the ethics of a truly great city. While the national capital was essentially a world city, the provincial centres, overshadowed by the giant in their midst, remained—in fact, provincial! —this, moreover, without the saving merit of being old-fashioned. Their atmosphere was, perhaps, best explained by the German term ' kleinstättig.'

The phase, of course, was more especially noticeable in public buildings, plazas, hotels, and clubs. Now, however, there are distinct symptoms that foreshadow a new era in this respect. Though the capital has magnified yet more its own particular splendour, the lesser towns have at length begun to assert themselves in such rivalry as is possible to them. And if they can produce a single object similar to the whole dozen of its kind that the capital can boast, surely they have done well enough!

During the past few years it is satisfactory to note that other centres have developed institutions that can compare to a certain extent with those of Buenos Aires. In Rosario, for instance, to say nothing of the public buildings such as the Palace of Justice, and the plazas such as that of Almirante Brown, there are purely social centres that are quite admirable. The premises of the Stranger's Club here are as spacious and imposing as those of any building of the kind in the capital—of course, with the notable exception of the Jockey Club itself. The

new Restaurant Victoria, too, is replete with a degree of excellence and comfort that would cause it to hold its own, not only in Argentina, but in any other part of the world. That the town would boast an establishment of the kind was certainly not dreamed of half a dozen years ago.

Rosario, in fact, is supplied with all the proper appurtenances of an important town—by which is implied churches, monuments, theatres, race-courses, and the inevitable brewery. Although the latter industry has obtained for but a few years, there is now scarcely an Argentine town of any size whatever that does not possess its own establishment for the manufacture of beer. With the German system as a model, the quality of the locally brewed Pilsen is surprisingly good, and the beverage in general, as a consequence, has gained very much in popularity.

Unlike Buenos Aires, and many of the lesser ports, Rosario, when approached by means of the river, is secretive and retiring to a disappointing extent. Indeed, it condescends to turn towards the Paraná little more than the dock buildings and some low cliffs that completely shut out the town itself from view. The long line of steamers, however, that fringe the wharves, speak for themselves, and the rows of corrugated iron sheds, each with its 'shoot' through which the grain is sent downwards into the holds of the vessels, are yet more eloquent of the true status of the place.

LA PERLA BAY: MAR DEL PLATA

The town of Córdoba, although by no means lacking in commercial importance, is of especial interest as an academic and scientific centre. An ancient city, founded by Cabrera in 1583, it is famed for its university. This latter, by the way, ranks second in seniority out of all such South American institutions. The present building is solid and substantial rather than handsome. In size, however, it is imposing, and the university is responsible for many statesmen and men of note who have gone out into the world from its halls.

The scientific interest of the town lies in the national observatory, a plain and efficient building, with massive circular towers, erected some forty years ago. The meteorological station here supplies the time throughout Argentina, for which dispensation the city is peculiarly well suited, since it is situated almost in the centre of the Republic. As may be imagined, the tone of Córdoba, with its eighty thousand inhabitants, differs not a little from that of the other towns of similar size whose ethics are purely commercial. A city of colleges, churches, and museums, its atmosphere is tranquilly scholastic, and its streets can count some of the few old colonial houses that remain in the country. The town can boast of excellent railway communications. Indeed, it is served by no fewer than five lines : the Central Argentine, the Central Northern, the Central Córdoba, the Córdoba North-Western, and the Malagueño.

Córdoba, picturesquely situated on rising ground though it is, lies just without the radius of the true mountains—the famous Sierra de Córdoba. These—whose landscape is so frequently compared to that of Switzerland—lie to the north-west of the town. It is true that few points in the range exist whose altitude exceeds four thousand feet; but the bold and rocky scenery causes this mediocrity in actual height entirely to be overlooked. One of the most popular spots here is La Falda, some fifty miles distant from Córdoba. La Falda contains a really good hotel, and in the neighbourhood is a wild collection of titanic boulders—a great rugged heap that is well worth a visit. The climate of the Sierra de Córdoba, by the way, is quite one of the finest in a country of fine climates. 'Atmospheric champagne,' is, I believe, the proper term. In any case, some prolonged draughts of this very dry refreshment have been of real service to many an invalid.

Mendoza, the most important western town of the Republic, constitutes at the same time one of the most picturesque and pleasant centres in the land. Situated at the extreme edge of the plains in the shadow of the Andes, with the great line of serrated peaks plainly visible from its confines, Mendoza is fortunate in the verdure and fertility of its immediate neighbourhood. For the purpose of the extensive irrigation of the district the waters of the Mendoza river have been dammed on their way down from the Andes heights, and the tiny rivulets and streams

MAR DEL PLATA: THE BRISTOL HOTEL

have been distributed in countless ramifications that include the city itself as well as its outskirts. The result, in the first place, is an amazing growth of grapes, and a wine industry that has assumed important proportions. In addition to this, the peach and general fruit orchards flourish with unusual success, and the wholesale planting of poplar groves has been responsible for a timber industry of no little magnitude. Thus Mendoza, intersected by its pleasant, refreshing canals, and surrounded by its vineyards, poplars, and orchards, smiles doubly, favoured both by nature and the ingenuity of man.

Mar del Plata, the fashionable southern seaside resort, continues to adapt itself in no half-hearted spirit to the progress of the times. With its sands and sea-bathing, its down-land and golf links, its rocks and bracing climate, there is nothing lacking that a first-class bathing place should possess. Hotels abound here to a greater extent than in any other Argentine town, with the exception, of course, of Buenos Aires itself. The best of these, the Bristol, is quite one of the finest in the country, and furnished, moreover, with a string band of unusual merit.

During the past few years Mar del Plata has grown considerably in every respect. Villas have increased in number, size, and elaboration; promenades have been beautified and extended, and the great southern special expresses are now even more luxurious than before. The place can lay claim to a short three months' season that vies in brilliancy with anything

that even the capital can produce. It is here that the costumes of the Argentine ladies—noted at all times for their genius in the art of dress—attain to their very acme. It is at Mar del Plata, too, that a longer purse is required than in any other place in Argentina. The delights of the spot are not to be obtained on the cheap. Many of the less wealthy and larger-familied Argentines assert, with emphasis, that a trip to Paris and back is the less costly of the two.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CAMPO

Aspect of the Agricultural Land—The 'Camp' as a Maker of Men—Extent of the Central Plains—Vegetation and Creatures of the Land—Estancia Life—Magnitude of Estates—Quality of the Live-stock—The Rural Society—Farming and Patriotism—Some Prominent Landowners—Mr. Miguel Alfredo Martinez de Hoz—A Famous Estanciero—Chapadmalal—A Wonderful Estate—La Germania—La Independencia—Cattle and Sheep—Distribution of Breeds—Horses—Mules—Pigs—Modernism and the *Campo*—The Gaucho—Temperament and the Times—The Power of the Law—Qualities and Endurance of the Gaucho—His Feats as Stockrider—As Doctor—The Treatment of Human and Animal Ills—Some Quaint Remedies and Superstitions.

It has been said with reason that the *campo* is the mainspring of Argentine life. Certainly the great agricultural sweep stands for the source of the millionaire's riches, for the reason of the Gaucho's existence, and for the magnet which attracts from Europe the hundreds of thousands of immigrants. An ocean of land stretching in complacent peace from horizon to horizon, flecked by plantations of trees, homesteads, sheds, windmill pumps, and the humble mud dwelling of the worker ; dotted thickly with the forms of grazing horses, cattle, and sheep,

and with broad areas of wheat, maize, linseed, and alfalfa sprouting up above the lower level of the grasses—such is the aspect of the lands that go to form the great central *campo*.

It is natural that the *campo* should not only have nourished the finest type of the Argentine, but have drawn to its broad, flat bosom the best specimens of foreigners resident in the land. Life in the 'camp' means an existence in the saddle, waged in a sunshine disturbed occasionally by tempest, dust-storm, and torrential downpour of rain—a calling inseparably associated with the clinking of bits, and the thudding of hoofs upon the soft, rich, alluvial soil. As a maker of men the *campo* is second to woman alone. In any case it completes what the other has begun. The bronzed riders afford as good an advertisement for the land as do its pedigree cattle and sheep.

To return to more prosaic facts, the extent of this main agricultural area is amazingly vast. The central plains extend practically from latitude thirty-two south to latitude forty-one south, and from longitude sixty-four to longitude sixty-one. The calculation is, of course, extremely rough, and even within this area are districts of another nature, such as the rolling, stream-pierced land of Entre Rios, and a few ranges of hills to the south and west. Indeed, of the great area specified, the provinces of Buenos Aires and southern Santa Fé are those that contain almost throughout their soil the typical country of the

richest plains—dead-flat, and practically devoid of indigenous trees save for the rare ombu and the stretches of tala trees on the banks of the few rivers.

It must not for one moment be imagined that pasture and agriculture is confined to these central plains. On the contrary, both industries obtain from the wooded lands of the extreme north to the foothills of the Andes on the west, and almost to Tierra del Fuego itself in the south. The central country, however, exceeds all the rest in actual fertility, and is the type of land most commonly associated with the traditions and romance of Argentine pasturage.

Although the life of the *campo* may be strenuous, it is not without its natural compensations. The galloping in summer over the green turf thickly shot with scarlet, white, and mauve verbena, and a host of other flowers; the surveying of the yellow corn, green maize, sky-blue linseed flower, and the purple of the alfalfa; the inspection of the sleek cattle and stout sheep grouped in the shade of the plantations about the wells and water deposits—all this adds not a little to the normal zest of a country existence.

To one addicted to the study of animal life, moreover, the *campo* offers a broad field in more senses than one. The ostrich, with his head poised at the end of his long neck in a stare of curiosity equally lengthy; the rapid flight of that great lizard, the iguana; the conferences and scuttlings of the companies of prairie-dogs, the vizcachas, at the fall

of night; the hoarse protests of the tiny owl; the shriller cries of the crested teru-tero; the noisy soarings of the martineta and partridge; the circlings of the carancho and chimangu (carrion-fowl both), and the evening flight of the duck—these are the commonest sights and sounds of all. Further afield there is the jaguar, puma, guanaco, deer, and numerous other companions of the wild order. But of these the central *campo* knows nothing, since, the creatures having shrunk back far to north and south, they tread its expanses no more. On the other hand, the host of small birds is innumerable, from the humming-bird, the handsome pecho colarado with its brilliant red breast, and the dainty black and white viuda or widow-bird, to the miniature pigeons and doves, the scissor-bird with its bisected tail, and the 'bien te veo' with its shrill call.

Such, after all, constitute only a small proportion of the creatures that a few days' ride through the plains will exhibit. It must be admitted that the average 'camp' man, not unnaturally, is more interested in live-stock and cereals than in the majority of these more insignificant subjects. Besides, so far as his hours of work are concerned, they are sufficiently occupied. On the more important estancias, at all events, the care of the valuable pedigree stock alone is a matter for no small anxiety. The indisposition, for instance, of a thousand pound bull necessarily reflects a certain gloom upon the community in general.

Indeed, the working of a large estate is conducted on a scale that is difficult to realise in England, where a few hundred acres are of some account, and where the owner of ten times that amount is a magnate of notoriety (in opposition to the celebrity of other days) in the land. The Argentine landowner of any importance whatever counts the extent of his holding by the league, numbers his live-stock by the thousand, and employs several hundreds of stock-riders, shepherds, and labourers to tend the animals and pastures. Thus a really imposing estancia of some fifteen square leagues may carry its twenty-five thousand cattle, its twenty thousand sheep, and as many thousands of horses as suit the convenience of the place.

Since the true values of the pastures were realised many generations ago Argentina has always represented the home of gigantic herds of cattle. That which has brought the country into such prominence of late years, therefore, is not the increase in the numbers of the live-stock, but the great advance in quality and breed. The outlay that has been expended upon the purchases of pedigree bulls during the past decade is little short of fabulous. Indeed, the best blood of all the famous English strains has been brought into requisition for the purpose, and in these days scarcely an agricultural show of the first importance is held in the home shires without its live-stock being ransacked for the supply of the Argentine *campo*.

In the matter of cattle, as well as in the majority of other things, the Argentine landowner is satisfied with nothing short of the best. So far as the live-stock is concerned, his methods are undoubtedly wise, since the plains are now overrun with an astonishing number of sleek and well-bred herds that not only constitute a powerful advertisement of the country's pastoral possibilities, but an invaluable national asset as well. Apart from its purely commercial ethics, the industry is fortunate in having been fostered from truly patriotic motives by various associations and private persons of standing.

Thus the Rural Society of Argentina, a body devoted to the pastoral and agricultural interests of the land, has effected admirable work in the organising of cattle shows, the encouragement of breed, and scientific research in all directions with a view to the agricultural advancement of the land. In addition to the successful fostering efforts of this very powerful society, there has been no lack of disinterested assistance on the part of the estancieros who hold a serious stake in the land. Such names as Martinez de Hoz, Malbran, Casares, Unzue, Paz, Pereyra, Anchorena, and a dozen others besides, are household words not only by reason of their possessions, but more especially on account of the active and unsparing service they have rendered—offices that have largely contributed to bring about the present standing of the great southern Republic. It goes without saying that the estancias of landowners

CHAPADMALAL : THE ESTANCIA HOUSE

such as these are in the first flight of those throughout the country. Here not only are the various stud bulls, sires, and rams worth each their various thousands of pounds, but they are in the charge of experts supplied not only by the country itself, but by England and other parts of Europe as well.

To Mr. Miguel Alfredo Martinez de Hoz it is necessary to devote some particular space, since his name is rapidly attaining a familiarity in England similar to that which it enjoys in Argentina. His estate in the latter country, the famous estancia Chapadmalal, stands as the last word in the pastoral and agricultural ethics of the country. It is not too much to say that Chapadmalal is imposing in every respect. To deal first with mere numbers, the place holds twenty thousand Durham cattle, nearly three thousand horses, and over thirty-eight thousand sheep. Nevertheless, overwhelming though this array of beasts may appear, the 'farm' does not stand alone in this respect. Chapadmalal prides itself on quality rather than numbers. The standard of the pedigree herds of Durham cattle, Hackney and Shire horses, and Lincoln sheep is amazing even to one accustomed to a high grade of such animals.

But the admiration which Chapadmalal evokes is, of course, not due solely to the great sums that have been employed in order to bring to its present state of perfection the great estancia that fringes the Atlantic in the neighbourhood of Mar del Plata.

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The mere expenditure of thousands of pounds on single bulls and sires is possible to every owner of a sufficiently lengthy purse. Here, the financial sinews stand merely as attributes of the knowledge and science employed. Chapadmalal with its hedges, its woods, its pheasants, its fruits of northern Europe—to say nothing of its self-contained telephone system, golf-links, and the whole lengthy category of its general conveniences—is an estate the sight of which would undoubtedly cause the eyes of the average British landowner to open in amazement. So far as the personality of its owner is concerned, it is unnecessary to dilate upon it here, since Mr. Martinez de Hoz is already noted, amongst other things, for his coaching feats on English soil and for his opinions as a judge at agricultural shows.

Another property of note, to which I have referred in my last book, is the Germania estancia in Buenos Aires, the property of the Messrs. Gunther, who have been connected with so many successful enterprises in the River Plate. This great estate, with its many leagues of agricultural area as well as of pasturage, is quite one of the finest in the land, and is equipped in proportion. With township, telephones, railway station, outlying *puestos*, and its human population of many hundreds, the estancia resembles a county rather than a private estate.

An estate, too, that is worthy of mention, even at the cost of repetition, is that of La Independencia, in Santa Fé, the property of Mr. Francis Bradney.

DON MIGUEL ALFREDO MARTINEZ DE HOZ COACHING IN ENGLAND

Although not aspiring to the great area of the others, the estancia is a perfect model of its kind. Mr. Bradney breeds Durham cattle and horseflesh of a type that has attained distinct celebrity. The number of polo ponies, moreover, that make their way from La Independencia to England is by no means small.

The two breeds of cattle, by the way, in chief favour in Argentina are the Shorthorn and the Hereford. Curiously enough, it is most unusual for any single breeder to lavish his attentions upon both races. The lover of one strain is almost certain to speak disparagingly of the other, and *vice versa*. Speaking broadly, the Shorthorn obtains throughout the centre and south of the accepted area of pastoral land. For all practical purposes the River Paraná bounds his territory to the north and east. Beyond this, in the province of Entre Rios—and even across the border in Uruguay—lies the domain of the red and white Hereford. When experts differ, it is a difficult enough matter to decide between the merits of the two. Of the pair the Shorthorn is generally held to be the more comely, the Hereford slightly the hardier. Therefore it may be taken for granted that the commercial advantages of either are on a par. As an accessory to the main breeds, polled Angus cattle are to be met with in many parts.

Notwithstanding the opening up of much fresh sheep-country in the south—in which latitudes the nature of the country is peculiarly suitable to the

ovine race—the actual numbers of the sheep have tended to diminish rather than to increase. On the other hand—such is the value of breed!—the lesser quantity of wool now shipped realises a far larger sum than did the greater previous bulk. The grade of the meat, moreover, has improved in proportion.

The most popular breeds of sheep in Argentina are the Lincoln, Leicester, Merino, and Romney Marsh. To attempt to enumerate here the many noted breeders of the animals would be impossible. Many fine specimens, however, of Lincolns are bred by Mr. Miguel Alfredo Martinez de Hoz at Chapadmalal, and by Mr. J. M. Sewell, another noted breeder, at Agua Blanca.

The breeding of horses is at least on a par with the other branches of the pastoral industry. Sufficient proof of this assuredly lies in the fact of the imposing quantity of world-famous sires that of late years have found their way to the southern republic, including Diamond Jubilee, purchased at a cost of thirty thousand guineas. Indeed, the quality of the Argentine horseflesh is now freely acknowledged in the numerous parts of the world to which it is shipped.

The mule was one of the earliest of the domestic animals to be introduced into Argentina, and the animal has been much encouraged to this day. Mule ownership on a large scale has from time to time proved an exceptionally profitable profession,

especially during periods such as that of the South African War, when Argentina was scoured from end to end in the quest of the creatures. The rearing of pigs has largely increased during the past few years, and there is every prospect that the industry will attain to large and important proportions in the near future.

Argentina is strongly imbued with the atmosphere of the new world. Its humanity permits itself the picturesque only when the sentimental trimmings beloved of the artistic mind go hand in hand with the practical details of the day's work. Seeing that his life is spent in daily communication with such animals, the love of the bull fight has died away, and no single ring dedicated to the sport exists in the land. Indeed, why should the 'camp' man contend with cattle within foolish barriers for pleasure when his work lies in controlling them by the thousand in the open 'camp'? As an accompaniment to the songs of love and adventure the guitar still holds its own; yet the strains of the dreamy instrument are for some subtle reason yearly becoming more exotic to the atmosphere.

As for the gaucho, he is going, however slowly, the way of the rest. That he retains his *bombachos*—the broad, flowing trousers—with the light, delicate boots to enclose their ends, his poncho and his sombrero, is due to the practical excellence, rather than the romantic ethics, of the costume. Not that his temperament has become intrinsically altered. His

broad heavy knife is still ready in its long silver or leathern sheath to avenge a slight, whether real or fancied.

But the weapon remains no longer the ruler of the 'camp.' Time was when its owner could use it, and crow like a cock over the body of his enemy for all the prairies to hear and to applaud. Then, vengeance lay only at the hands of the relatives of the dead, and as likely as not the feud might end in their death and the slayer's continued life. Besides, whatever fate it might bring, such private warfare was the breath of life and the salt of the plains. There is no doubt that this new, uncomfortable, and all-pervading law has brought many inconveniences in its train. If a man has used the knife in the good old way, the sequel is wofully different from the honourable procedure of tradition! There is need to flee like the wind, to hide, to dodge, and to lurk here and there in as humiliating a fashion as though the avenger of a wrong were on a par with a vizcacha or even a hissing skunk! And even after all this trouble he may end by meeting the same fate as one of these detestable animals! Thus to bring the knife out of its scabbard half a dozen words are now required instead of three, or the theft of a poncho when that of a cigarette would have sufficed before. Not that these latter proportions invariably obtain, since the gaucho is wont to act from causes of pride rather than of material amount.

Externally the change is less evident. His

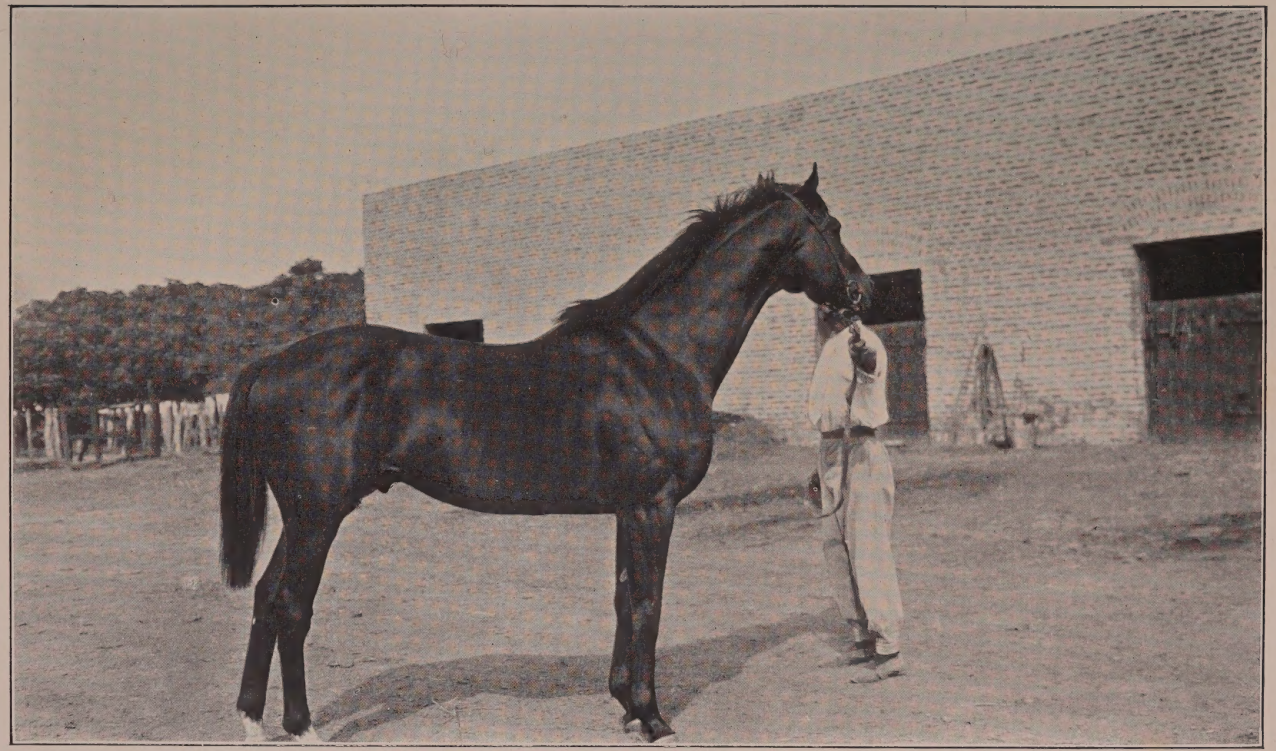
bridle, perhaps, tends to be rather less heavily silvered than of yore, and his saddle glitters a shade less, possibly, from its coating with that same metal. Yet his appearance upon a *fiesta* day remains sufficiently imposing, and, aided by his displays of consummate horsemanship, the gaucho cuts as gallant a figure as can be imagined. As always, too, once upon his horse, his outfit is complete. Passing the nights upon his blanket saddle spread upon the earth, he will journey in utter content for day after day, feeling the lack of nothing so long as he has a horse beneath him to ride.

But to see the gaucho at his very best is to watch him in the course of his daily work. The sight of the rider and his horse at the everyday gymnastics that the chasing and subduing of refractory cattle compel, the twisting, turning, and galloping, the whirling of the lasso amidst the wilder herds, the scientific charging and hustling of the horned malcontent—his various admirable performances show him as a man of iron nerve, elastic sinews, and incomparable endurance. When the cattle have been driven together in thousands to a *Rodeo*, and the hoofs thunder, and the forest of horns waves beneath the cloud of dust, it is not the great army of cattle that affords the chief point of interest. The eye instinctively seeks the company of gauchos upon the outskirts, and takes in the feats of the men with wholesale admiration. Lining up to 'part' the stupendous mass of the animals, the thin hedge of

men in the midst of the serried, waving horns plays an amazing part, controlling the bellowing, uneasy multitude with unswerving resolution and intrepidity. Imperturbable always, the gaucho is a past master of his dangerous craft—a true and worthy son of the *campo*!

His devotion to a *patron* who has gained his respect—and the ordinary ethics of courtesy and fair-dealing may be counted on to win this from the gaucho—has been proved on countless occasions. Honest and faithful, his pride is easily wounded, it is true, and his temperament demands the treatment that one man of consideration should accord to another, since his own manners are quiet, and his voice curiously soft. But of the gaucho's character I will speak no more, lest I make of him too great a paragon, and lest a future acquaintanceship with him may breed disillusion on the part of the reader. Besides, the temperament of the entire race is naturally not formed on a single model. If evilly-disposed, he will 'go the whole hog'; for he is thorough in all things. But concerning the average type of gaucho, it is best to accept his employer's word—a verdict that is warmly favourable.

The gaucho's own particular methods of dealing with the ailments that fall to the lot of himself and of his animals harmonise perfectly with the trend of his life and imagination. His superb health makes light of open hurts. In another place I have already told the story of one who, having lost three



WINGFIELD'S CHARM: A SIRE AT THE ESTANCIA LA INDEPENDENCIA

fingers from a gun explosion, was attended by a doctor, and given a sleeping draught, to be taken at nine o'clock in the evening. The sleeping draught was more worry to the man than his wound. Two days afterwards he went to his *patron* to beg the loan of an alarum clock—he had found it impossible to wake up of an evening to take the medicine !

Honest wounds and blows, however deep and however maiming in their effects, are things of very little account to the dweller in the *campo*. Provided that the beginning and end of the damage be plain upon the surface, what does a lopped limb matter, or a crushed hand, or a hole in the side ? Man dies at once, or nature mends these things, as surely as the air of the *campo* has endowed the gaucho with the purest animal strength ever since the days when his childish form first rolled upon the soil and clutched vaguely at the dust and grass. But these mysterious ills that rage beneath an unbroken skin are a very different matter. They are unnerving in their effects to the point of causing actual terror, followed by an apathy that frequently leads more than halfway to the gates of death. For malignant and hidden gnawings are incomprehensible, irresistible, and almost certainly the work of the devil.

As regards his animals, the remedies for their less simple diseases are handed down from generation to generation and treasured with a fitting reverence. The majority are designed to combat the dark evils by the appropriate weapons of mysticism. In

many there is a curious blend of superstition and of a treatment that is in itself efficacious—although the practical reason for its power is not in the least suspected. I am indebted to Mr. R. J. Flory, himself an adept in veterinary matters, for much valuable information on a subject the intricacies of which are, as a rule, completely baffling. For no little secrecy is wont to be attached to the operation of these quaint cures, and the gaucho as a rule is extremely loth to unburden himself of the various formulæ to be observed. There is no doubt that Mr. Flory, by dint of his genuine interest in such matters, has won an altogether unusual amount of information from these hardy sons of the *campo*.

Commencing with the horses, the remedies for some of the equine ailments are not a little interesting. A foal, for instance, afflicted with meningitis is apt to run in a circle. The cure for this is to burn a cross by means of a hot iron at the back of the animal's ear, on the opposite side to the direction in which he is given to turn. This is one of the cases where a foundation of actual science underlies the magic of symbolism, since the burn is efficacious in so far as it acts as a counter-irritant to the brain trouble. Of the latter explanation, however, the potent and mysterious horse-doctor is profoundly ignorant, although the lore must have owed its original inception to the mind of one who was learned in the actual veterinary craft.

The sign of the cross is employed again in the

case of a horse who is suffering from certain varieties of internal trouble. Here, symbolism alone is relied on for the cure. A small portion of hair is cut respectively from the forelock, from the fetlock of either foreleg, and from the tail. By this means the requisite sacred sign is achieved.

An attack of sunstroke in the equine family is treated in a considerably more drastic fashion. If in the neighbourhood of one of the great streams, his owner will wait if possible until such time when the river is in flood. Then the sufferer is taken out for an hour's gallop, after which he is driven into the river and made to swim for half an hour against the tide. At the end of that time he is permitted to emerge, and is then made to gallop again for an hour. The treatment may certainly be relied on to drive away all sensations of sunstroke—occasionally, it is possible, at an increased cost.

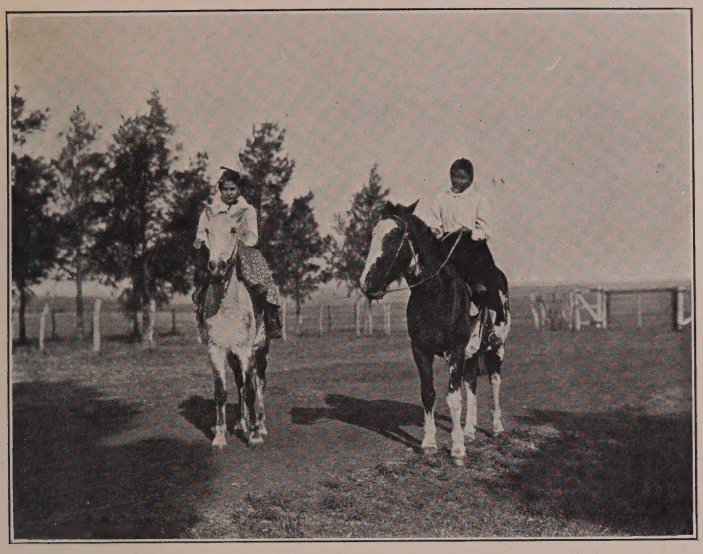
The manipulation of a horse that has strained a back tendon is both curious and sound. A certain number of hairs are clipped from the patient's tail, and these are bound tightly about the *sound* fetlock of the other back leg. The result is that the animal goes lame in *both* legs. The treatment here is in reality perfectly logical, since enforced use prevents the strained tendon from becoming stiff, and the crude remedy is by no means an unsuccessful one. In the eyes of the gaucho, however, the curative properties lie purely and simply in the hairs of the sufferer's tail. A piece of string, or even the hair of

another animal would, according to him, be of no avail whatever.

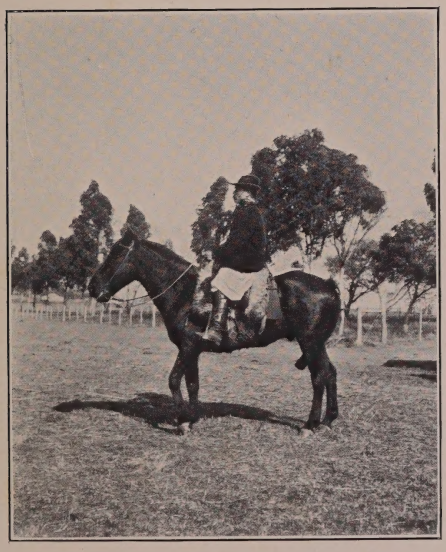
The methods employed to alleviate the sufferings of a calf whose internal mechanism is upset through an unduly liberal partaking of its mother's milk are rather harder to follow. First of all some milk is obtained from the maternal cow, and is held in readiness. Then the tail of the calf is pulled until the little creature bellows with pain. The note of anguish gives the signal for the wetting of either of its flanks with the milk. How far the merit of the treatment lies in the applied milk or the pulled tail it is impossible to say. Neither, apparently—like the black draught and blue pills of bygone days!—is efficacious without the other. Yet to what extent the concatenation of events that lead to this astonishing attempt at a cure is appreciated by the youthful sufferer is doubtful.

Compared with this strenuous performance, the treatment of a fly-blown sheep is tame. Yet, if it affects the animal at all, it does so in a less unpleasant fashion. A few small pieces are cut out of the turf upon which it has stepped; a cross is carved upon the soil beneath each, and the sods are then replaced with the grass downwards and the bare earth above.

So far as his own welfare is concerned, the gaucho has various remedies that are held infallible. If he be in his *rancho*, for instance, during a thunder-storm, it is as well to put a cow's horn on the cooking fire.



GOING TO SCHOOL



READY FOR THE ROAD

The smoke rising from this will ward off the most aggressive lightning flash. If bitten by a snake, moreover, the patient will find it of great assistance to his case to cook and eat a portion of the reptile—a treatment that is a little reminiscent of the ancient English procedure concerning the hair of the biting dog.

A cure shorn of its mystic elements is of little interest to the true gaucho. It is possible, for instance, that a bath might be advisable for some complaint or other. But one who understands him would not dream of putting the matter in so bald a fashion. The mere advice to take a bath for its own sake would probably be spurned and neglected. But if the gaucho be told with becoming emphasis and gravity to enter a certain pool at eleven o'clock at night when the moon will be at a given point in the heavens he would rise from a deathbed to comply with the awesome instructions. For the gaucho, after all, is fortunate in two of his possessions—the passions of a man, and the faith of a child.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME CAMPO FEATURES

An Episode at the Plaza Hotel—The Daring of the Locust—Its Habits—Popular Exaggeration of the Insect's Possibilities—The Trail of the Destroyer—Some Aspects of a Visitation—Egg-laying—The *Saltona*—Methods of Destruction—*Voladores*—Pest Cycles—The Thistle—Benefits of the Plant—The Horse as a Connoisseur of the Growth—Methods of Feeding—The *Uña de Diablo*—A Curious Plant—Climate of Central Provinces—'Camp' Storms—Rainfall and the Plains—Agriculture as a Preventative of Floods—Peculiarities of the Paraná and Uruguay Rivers—Sugar.

It was in the great hall of the Plaza Hotel that the thing occurred. The place was crowded, for two reasons. The first was that it was the hour of afternoon tea; the second, because the day was a *dia de modo*, and, as such, specially set apart for fashionable attendance at the place. In the galleries, consequently, were seated bevies of Argentine ladies, robed in the full glory of those creations that make them the most effectively brilliant personages—I must not say in the world entire for fear of international female wrath. In the columned space beneath were others, while, scattered here and there, were knots of men—an Argentine general in uniform, statesmen, landowners, officials, and travelling

foreigners—the majority still a little agape at the wonder of the new hotel, the latest sop to the needs of modern Argentina.

With the snatches of conversation in Spanish, and other less liquid speeches sounding intermittently from out of the background of the orchestra's music, the scene was politely cosmopolitan, and the atmosphere of the place such as might best be described by that expressive but abominable word, *chic*. It was in the midst of all this that the phenomenon came about. From the heights of the dome above decked out in gold, marble, and white descended a little fluttering thing with gauzy wings that shimmered in the light. Soaring slowly downwards in perfect calm, it alighted upon the thick carpet, and settled itself to rest in the very centre of the hall.

It was the defiance of the locust! His quiet repose constituted the expression of his utter contempt for all and everything outside the interests of his own tribe. Daring the feet of passing waiters with impunity for a while, he afforded a spectacle that partook of the sublime! It was almost possible to credit the creature with a fine dramatic instinct as he sat down in the midst of that very brilliant company, almost every one of which had a more or less direct interest in the extermination of his species. Eventually falling a martyr to the cause of his daring mission, he was fortunate even in his death, since it was productive of a greater disturbance than usually attends the end of so small a winged affair. For

a waiter, startled by the unexpected crunch from beneath his boot, slanted a plate, and shot half a dozen creamy cakes from it on to the carpet—sticky headstones to the memory of the locust!

The locust is certainly the best-hated creature in Argentina. Compared with him the poisonous reptiles of the far northern territories are brothers in arms with humanity. The latter, although they may take a life here and there, are at least conscientious respecters of property, whereas the locust has always been profoundly ignorant of the meaning of the word *tuum*. In consequence of this the insect is spelt with a very large L throughout the 'camp,' and affords an endless topic of conversation at those seasons when a visitation of his unwelcome millions is possible.

Ere dealing at further length with the manners and customs of the unpleasant creature, it would be as well to lay some emphasis upon the subject of his limitations. So much is wont to be heard of his astonishing feats of depredation that in many minds the term 'locust' has become synonymous with a country bared from end to end. As a matter of fact, such is the power of the locust that the mere naming of the beast has ere now met with an instantaneous response in the markets far over the seas. Indeed, on more than one occasion stocks and shares have fluttered downwards in London in obedience to a chance rumour concerning the insect's wings. It is even possible that at times the rumour was

less disinterested than the locust. For before now the animal has certainly served as effectively for 'bearing' purposes as it has for those of stripping.

By all this I do not, of course, mean to imply that the insect is other than a curse, and a serious enough one at that. Where it alights in earnest it devastates with a grim completeness that leaves a trail infinitely more desolate than the track of a human army. Yet, when the size of Argentina is taken into consideration, it will at once be understood that the damage, heartrending as it is, is merely of a local character.

As I have had occasion to point out elsewhere, although a serious visitation of locusts will deprive a certain number of agriculturalists of the greater part of their harvests, if not of the entire produce of the year, the total sum of such losses represents a quite insignificant percentage of the agricultural results of the republic as a whole. Thus, a few lanes of devastation may have been ploughed through Entre Rios, Santa Fé, and Buenos Aires, involving many tens of thousands of acres. Viewed by the unsympathetic light of hard statistics, the effects upon the general agriculture of the three provinces will be surprisingly small—although to one within the stricken area the chaos, naturally enough, appears ubiquitous and all-pervading. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that a really serious and general impression upon Argentine produce could only be effected by a far larger number of the pests cursed with bigger

interiors and stronger appetites than any that have yet been known.

Curiously enough the locusts, when they come down from the north, would seem to pay small attention to the intermediate provinces. They are wont to treat the Chaco, for instance, much in the way that an express train deals with a wayside station. I have it on the authority of one whose knowledge of the province is exceptional that the very rare halts of the insects in that district are welcomed with no little joy by the Indians, to whom they furnish ample and much-appreciated meals.

It is the central provinces alone that furnish the locusts' favourite resorts, since they do not venture far to the south. Bahia Blanca, for instance, is supposed to be beyond the radius of the creature's journeyings. This freedom is accepted as a fact with the utmost fervour by the southern inhabitants. To such an extent, indeed, that I had the utmost difficulty, when driving in the company of a Bahia Blanca estanciero, in persuading my companion that a few obvious locusts by the roadside were in reality what they seemed. In view of the fact that they are officially held impossible in the place, he had played a Nelson trick with his eyes, by means of which the creatures became grasshoppers! In justice to my friend's optimism, however, it must be admitted that the insects in question represented nothing beyond a few stragglers who had wandered aimlessly

A HALT BY THE WAY

far away from the main armies. As for the grasshoppers themselves, there are times when even these can imitate fairly closely the voracious example of their bulkier brethren.

When the locusts stream southwards in great clouds that resemble rolling smoke, when the overladen branches of the trees crack beneath the combined weight of millions, and the sky is darkened by the passing bodies—all this affords a striking, if lamentable, spectacle. Yet at this period the visitors are least to be dreaded. The first business, that of egg-laying, is conducted considerably at the expense of the appetite. For this purpose they will choose a spot where the surface of the land is bare, for preference a 'camp' road. Here they will settle, staining the soil of the highway with broad patches of a deeper brown.

To drive along such a road in a gale at this season is to experience a situation amply filled both with interest and discomfort. After a period of battling in the teeth of the wind through a pouring, blinding stream of locusts and dust driven in equal quantities the interest is apt to depart, but the discomfort, never. To ride through these patches on a day when the atmosphere is still is to know another aspect of this myriad life. It resembles the passage through a brown sea, with brown waves and foam rising as ceaselessly from about the horse's hoofs as though they were actual water leaping up from the bow of a vessel.

Once occupied with egg-laying, the brown hordes seldom trouble to move far if disturbed. Indeed, the business of the hour does not favour rapid movement of any kind on the part of the female. The actual process consists in employing the tail as a kind of bradawl with which to bore a hole in the earth rather more than an inch in depth. Thus only the head and shoulders of the creature are visible above the surface of the ground. An endeavour to extricate one of these females almost invariably ends in the separation of the upper part from the lower, since the tail seems firmly wedged in the soil. It is at the bottom of the tiny shaft thus bored that the eggs are laid. Varying from eighty to one hundred and twenty in number, they are yellow and rather maggoty in appearance; they are pressed together, moreover, to the shape of a closely set bunch of grapes. The scraping up of the soil thus infested reveals in parts sufficient of these little masses to form a distinct, if temporary, substratum.

The duty of egg-laying costs many a mother locust dear. The unprofitable endeavour to add yet a few more billions to the countless army of undesirables lays the insects open to attack. When their numbers upon the ground are considered sufficiently imposing, herds of cattle and flocks of sheep are driven to the spot and set to trample to and fro over the seething ranks of bodies. The serried hoofs of the sheep are satisfactorily murderous in their effect; but those of the cattle, more widely

separated, are wont to account for a surprisingly small number of bodies. The services that a wide roller would render here are almost incalculable. Unfortunately, even on the level surface of the camp, it is impossible to chase armies of locusts from point to point with a roller! Hence the attack is devised by the best means at command, and these happen to be hoofs.

With the careless and cheerful exit from his egg of the young locust comes the most serious phase of the invasion. The youngster is known as a *saltona*, since, not yet being provided with wings, he is forced to jump his way along in the fashion of a grasshopper. He begins life under a certain disadvantage, since from its tenderest conception a price is placed upon his body—at the rate of fifty centavos a bagful. Though endowed in his infancy with far more brilliant colouring than falls to his lot in full maturity, he is serious-minded and earnest enough so far as his food is concerned. Since he cannot fly, he eats his way along, hopping between bites. Up to a point he is reasonable, and consents to be guided. For instance, I have seen a whole host of him intimidated into advancing in proper pedestrian fashion along the bare high road by a number of women who flapped empty bags on either side of the way. But that was merely on a short excursion through the confines of a small settlement.

The *saltona*, as a matter of fact, once on the march, calls for all the attention that can possibly be

spared him. Amongst other things, he demands companies of men with spades, and mile upon mile of corrugated iron sheeting. When his army moves forward the noise of the progress, as the countless bodies come to earth after each hop, exactly resembles a torrential downpour of rain.

The procession calls into being the human enemies who, gathering prepared for the fray, scan the rustling brown stream in order to ascertain in which direction it is moving. That once ascertained, no time is lost. A certain number of the locust-fighters hurry forward ahead of the procession, and dig a trench across the path of the advancing horde. Backed by its wall of corrugated iron, the obstruction is contrived in the shape of a crescent, so as completely to outflank the columns of the insects as they come upon it. At the moment of contact the chaos begins. The first ranks, diving light-heartedly into the pit, leap upwards again in a vain attempt to emerge upon the higher ground upon the other side—a feat that is rendered impossible not only by the wall of the trench but by the corrugated iron barrier that tops it.

In any case the efforts of the pioneers are short-lived, since they are smothered almost immediately by the enthusiastic onrush of the later ranks, who in turn are overwhelmed by the main body and rear-guard, until the whole pit is choked with the bodies, and the nauseating odour of the locusts spreads far and wide to pollute the air. The moment has come

for the final act in the drama of insect death. The earth is shovelled upon the trapped heaps, and a little later nothing beyond a few mounds of soil mark the unhonoured graves of the army of *saltonas*.

Should the *saltona* survive these perils, he will in good time acquire his wings simultaneously with the loss of his brighter hues, and will join the more ambitious ranks of the fliers—the *voladores*. After which, unless he fall a victim to a parasitical insect, an unconscious ally of mankind who preys upon his internal organs, he will wend his way back towards the end of summer over the pastures, rivers, and the ultimate tropical stretches until he has reached his northern haunts.

If the locust could lay claim to one single merit, it would be that he gives employment to many folk—from the government locust inspectors down to a host of humble *peones*. But even this does not avail him in Argentina, where the demand for general labour exceeds the supply. There can be no doubt that, whether in his hopping or flying stage, the creature is an unmitigated nuisance. Not only does he foul the flavour of the eggs that an honest hen lays who has fed on him ; but even his dead body is held as useless to manure the soil. Thus he shirks the one mission in the world that is confided equally to nearly every other living thing. He has, in fact, touched the lowest depth of uselessness.

The behaviour of fruit trees, after once having been attacked and thoroughly stripped by locusts,

is not a little peculiar. For a considerable while afterwards they appear to lose all sense of season, and will frequently push out blossom at an entirely wrong time of the year. If the bark of the trunk itself has been much eaten, the trees are wont to become discouraged to the point of making no attempt to bear fruit for years—if ever—afterwards.

In spite of this catalogue of evils, the fact remains that the powers of the insect have invariably been exaggerated rather than under-estimated. For all its various smitten districts, the Republic as a whole can treat the worst endeavours of the pest with comparative equanimity. Moreover the visitations are never continuous beyond a certain period. They run in cycles that have something akin to the plagues of ancient Europe, since they usually endure for about seven years, and are succeeded by a similar period of locustless peace!

The thistle is almost as much a feature of the central 'camps' as is the owl, the teru-tero, and the grass of the plains itself. Whatever impression the expanses of dark-green thorny leaves, with their heavy nodding purple blossoms above, may make upon the newcomer, the feeling of the estanciero towards the plants is rather cordial than otherwise. In the first place the growth almost invariably affords evidence of a good soil, and the thistle itself is by no means to be despised in the way of fodder. During a drought the animals will feed heartily upon the desiccated stems and upon the seed as well. The food suits

A DENIZEN OF THE PASTURES

horses admirably, although there are occasions when it adapts itself less well to cattle.

Even when other varieties of fodder are plentiful, the sight of a horse feeding from choice upon the green thistle plants is by no means uncommon. The taste for the spiky food must resemble that for oysters. That it is not acquired in a day is obvious from the methodical methods, resulting from lengthy practice, by which the horse approaches his meal.

The true equine connoisseur would no more accept his thistles without preparation than would the oyster lover his bivalves without lemon, cayenne, and the other condiments. Approaching the particular group that he has selected, the horse sets to work to break down the plants with his fore hoofs, and then he continues patiently to paw the stems and leaves until the mass is reduced more or less to a pulp, and is to a great extent deprived of the stinging power of its pricks. More or less of a salad, in fact, it is now held to be palatable, and is swallowed with no little gusto.

A very curious plant that is found here and there on the *campo* is the *uña de diablo*, or devil's claw. The leaves somewhat resemble those of the pumpkin, and from these sprouts a yellow flower. The seed of this presents a most extraordinary appearance. From a closely spiked body—rather akin to that of a teazle, but infinitely harder and more solid—sprout two curved prongs that resolve themselves at the

extremities into sharp spikes. The body itself in colour and shape strangely resembles the head of a hedgehog, and the appearance of the thing with its claws is much more akin to a dead animal than to a seed. Apart from its curious features, the *uña de diablo* constitutes an undesirable object. Once enmeshed within the fleece of a sheep, for instance, it is impossible to be extricated without damage to the wool. In consequence of this the plant is sternly discouraged by government, and, when found, its destruction is ordained by law.

Although the climate of the central provinces is essentially temperate, with intervals of heat that certainly exceed any temperature known in England, the phenomena that occur from time to time are curiously reminiscent of the tropics. One of the most marked of these is the violence of the summer thunder-storms. A notable outburst of the kind is scarcely to be excelled in any other part of the world. There are times when the heaven of the 'camp' is ablaze from one end to another, and when the brilliant flashes of lightning seem to fork downwards simultaneously from a dozen storm centres that roll in separate and sullen majesty. Indeed, he who has not witnessed a convulsion of the kind has missed one of the most striking natural spectacles that the *campo* has to offer.

Far more rare are the hailstorms that burst in volleys of tremendous missiles from above. As a matter of fact, neither this rarity nor the limited

area upon which the visitation is wont to strike are matters for regret. When in being, the power of the great hailstones is not to be despised. To say nothing of the death they are wont to deal out to chickens and small birds of the *campo*, even the larger species of animals are not invariably accustomed to escape scot-free. As an illustration of the force with which these heavenly messengers are occasionally known to descend, I was shown in southern Entre Rios an old brick-tiled roof of a *galpon* that had been pierced and riddled by the frozen pellets. From the practical point of view of damage to agriculture, however, these isolated and very rare disturbances are of no account whatever.

Upon the pampa itself, as may be imagined, floods are unknown. The soil of the plains seems capable of soaking up the heaviest and most continuous downpour as it comes, allowing little of the liquid to congregate except in those spots where the depressions are more than usually marked. In such cases the water usually remains in a sort of water-course—a blind-ally of a river, in the utter absence of any genuine streams—that each previous heavy rainfall has marked out for its site since long ages.

In the neighbourhood of the great rivers of the Paraná and Uruguay, with their countless ramifications, the danger of flooding is naturally a far more serious one. Curiously enough, it has been noticed here of late years that the inroads of the risen water

upon the *campo* has been far less widespread than was formerly the case. The reason lies in the increase of cereal culture, and consequently in the area of ploughed land. Into this the waters are sucked up, swallowed, and rendered comparatively harmless, whereas before they had been wont to roam at their own sweet will far and wide over the unbroken surface of the grass land. A slight cause, it may appear, to effect such an alteration, but a very efficient means for all that.

It is seldom, by the way, that the flooding of the Uruguay and Paraná is simultaneous. The former, swollen by rains, rises as a general rule in the spring; the latter, its tributaries from the west fed by melting snows, in the autumn. It has been noticed that an especially violent flood of the Paraná occurs once in about every eight years. Although it is difficult to understand how the reason can be other than coincidence, the regularity of these intervals that separate the important floods is curiously marked.

Among the more varied products of the *campo*, by the way, is that of sugar. The country of the cane lies, naturally, to the north, where it flourishes more particularly in the province of Tucuman. This industry has now assumed important proportions, and the installation of many of the factories is excellent. Owing to the distance of the district from the seaboard, however, no exportation has yet been attempted, and the commerce remains an internal one.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SHEARING SKETCH

The Advent of the Sheep—Aspects of the *Galpon*—Methods of Working—Machine Shearing—Capabilities of the Workers—A Varied Gathering—Crude Sleeping Places—The Mid-day Meal—A Great *Asado*—Some Questions of Consumption upon an Estancia—The Butcher's Bill—Diet of the Gaucho.

In the neighbourhood of the great *galpon*, the shed that is devoted to the purpose of shearing, the pasture land is thickly flecked with the sheep that browse in serene unconsciousness of what lies before them. In the background the slowly moving clouds of dust that go floating over the roads that intersect the remoter paddocks tell of the approach of other fleecy companies all bound towards the common centre. Each flock as it draws near is seen to be in charge of its own particular brown-faced shepherds. They are working unaided, for the assistance of a sheep-dog is a luxury almost unknown throughout the country.

Within the *galpon* itself a busy scene is being enacted. A long row of *peones* lines either side of the building almost from end to end. Each man is plying his shears with the utmost speed that is

consistent with the safety of the sheep's skin upon which he is operating. Considering the fact that several score of men are gathered together, a curious silence prevails so far as the human voice is concerned. Each, absorbed in his task, is working with the strenuousness that remuneration on the basis of results induces.

The sounds of the clicking shears, the shuffling feet, and the dull movements of the prostrate sheeps' bodies as they are pulled to and fro are deadened occasionally by the deep rumble of a truck. Down the centre of the shed steel rails extend between the ranks of the workers, and the sideless truck, propelled by a couple of men, is hastening along upon these. The lowly carriage is covered with sheep, closely packed and motionless, since the four feet of each are roped together. In a double prostrate row, with their heads protruding in a regular line from either side of the vehicle, the appearance of the helpless creatures is even more pathetically foolish than is their usual lot.

At intervals of a few yards the truck is brought to a halt, and a sheep is tossed out to right and left to feed the shearers along the line with material for their labour. In this respect the men are more fortunate than those in our own colonies, where, such aids to the task being unknown, each is obliged himself to secure the sheep from the pen set apart for his use.

In other respects the scene is very similar to those

which the Australian and New Zealand woolsheds know, although the gay snatches of song and chance shouting form no part of the procedure here. The *peon* is inclined to be a silent worker, and such ebullitions of natural spirits are rare indeed on the part of these wild-looking wielders of the shears.

From a space at the end of the shearing area proper sounds the whirring of machinery, and here the blades of the shears are leaping backwards and forwards at lightning pace beneath the force of steam. Fastened to the end of the long steel tentacles that connect them with the engine, they are guided through the fleece with an astonishing rapidity, and the *mauvais quart d'heure* of the animals here is—to employ a metaphorical anachronism—a short one. The usual daily number of sheep, by the way, for which the average man will account is sixty, by no means a bad performance, although it does not quite equal the feats of the antipodean fleece craftsmen.

In the background, at the extreme end of the shed, the wool is being classified and piled in heaps; the press is being fed, and is working with creakings and groans as it wrestles with the wool and its covering, and gives out the bales, gunnied and hooped, one after the other. All is much as elsewhere, down to the all-pervading and rather sickly odour of the wool.

It is the men themselves who afford the most interesting and original subjects of all. They have

ridden in from far and wide on mounts of a wonderful variety of condition and breed, as a hundred horses that are the guests of a neighbouring paddock will testify to. As for their riders, the magnet of the shearing shed has drawn in humanity from out-of-the-way *ranchos*, from the outskirts of 'camp' towns, and even from out of the ranks of the fishermen on the islands of the great rivers.

They are here now, attracted both by the profitable period of work, and by the social possibilities that such a gathering promises. True children of the *campo*, their life is simple, but not unfilled. Their blanket beds—that serve as saddles on the occasions of their journeys—are scattered here and there upon the turf in the neighbourhood. The sleeping places of nearly all are as open to the light of day as they are to the stars at night. It is obvious, however, that the owners of one or two have become imbued with more modern and less Spartan views. The highest point in these efforts at architectural luxury is evidenced by an ambitious shelter of sacks and cut grasses held in place by four poles—undoubtedly the habitation of a degenerate!

The midday meal is in preparation at a spot close by the sleeping places. Long iron spits, slanting inwards, have been stuck in the earth about a blazing bonfire. Suspended from the ends of these is a mighty circle of half sheep that frizzle eloquently above the burning wood. It is a stupendous *asado*

this, worthy of the best traditions of the soil. Indeed, there is certainly no degeneracy in the ethics of appetite. In order to satisfy the *peon's* hunger, an entire sheep is allotted daily as the portion of seven men. Thus the hundred labouring visitors at the end of their fortnight's stay will have consumed more than six hundred sheep, a feat that places them almost on a level with such phenomena as a drought or some other natural scourge! But of these peculiarities more later.

The *asado* is now sufficiently roasted, and the men have come to the spot to attack the meat with the long and heavy knives they have drawn from their belts. They look a happy-go-lucky lot as they feed in true gaucho fashion, cutting a long strip from the carcase, stuffing the end in wholesale fashion into the mouth, and then, during the process of mastication, slashing the piece across in order to separate it from the main strip. The manœuvres that accompany a gaucho meal are a little reminiscent of military tournaments and exploits at heads and posts.

Given a body well filled with meat, and a blanket to place beneath it, there is little else of material import that troubles the gaucho in this world or the next—not even the question of his earnings, apparently; for he is wont to gamble these away in the lightest-hearted fashion imaginable, when, moreover, the sweat by which he obtained them is not yet dry upon his brow. In order to place temptation

so far as possible outside his reach, payment in cash is wont to be deferred until the conclusion of the whole shearing, and at the end of each day's work the *peones* receive vouchers for the amounts to which they are respectively entitled. But the sporting propensities of the *campo* are not to be curtailed by so transparent a device as this. It is as simple to gamble for the vouchers as for the ready money, and thus the parental regulation results merely in providing a set of convenient counters for the game that is played each night with a certain degree of stealth.

The consequences of this gambling are, of course, frequently lamentable. It happens often enough that a man, whom the cards have especially favoured, will present for payment a bulky sheaf of vouchers, although his own industrial efforts have been the least marked of the whole party. Whereas another, who has toiled in the shed to such a degree that he has almost a thousand shorn sheep to his actual credit, will avoid the neighbourhood of the paying official altogether, since he no longer possesses a single scrap of the paper currency to be exchanged for cash.

Indeed, once possessed with the true fever of the game he may be in far worse plight at the end of the shearing than at the beginning. Then he rode; now he walks. With horse, saddle, and even coat, all gone as hostages to fortune, he strides away on foot in the shirt and *bombachos* that alone remain to him. He is a little worried at the unwonted pedestrian

method of progress, but fairly content since the time has proved an exciting one. A roving and very bold blade who takes adventures and the strokes of fortune with appropriate ease!

A rather amusing incident in connexion with these gambling propensities of the *peones* occurred at a very well-known estancia some years ago, when the laws were not so strictly enforced as now by the rank and file of their agents. The estanciero was approached by the authorities with a request for his assistance in putting an end to the play that was responsible for so many of the minor tragedies of the shearing shed. The estanciero, his optimism deadened by experience, expressed his doubts as to the possibility of the achievement, but offered to co-operate heartily with an official who might be sent to further this desirable end. The official, a sergeant of police, arrived, and took up his position in the *galpon* as guardian of its moralities. In order that his vigilance might be doubly sharpened the estanciero added from his own pocket a daily contribution of two dollars to the pay of the official organiser of a new era.

The experiment was apparently successful. Nothing was heard of gambling during that shearing season, and yet the men seemed cheerful and content. The estanciero congratulated the sergeant, the sergeant congratulated the estanciero, and the authorities felicitated both. Yet things are not always as they seem. It was not until the departure

of all the shearers—and of the sergeant as well—had left the *galpon* bare and untenanted once more that the *capataz* revealed the secret of what had really occurred. The gambling had been especially good that season, more lively and strenuous than ever before. The plan for ameliorating the lot of the reluctant shearers had left their enterprise altogether out of account. As a counterblast of their own they had clubbed together and secured the non-interference of the sergeant at the price of *four* dollars a day. Thus the delighted official found himself in the pay of three separate sets of masters at the same time. He slept in peace at night, and doubtless wished that shearing time might continue for ever I had the story in the identical woolshed in which the comedy was played. The expression, too, on the self-same *capataz's* face, as he corroborated his master's narrative, was of a nature to leave no doubt as to the possession of a sense of humour on the part of the gaucho.

I have referred above to the vigorous appetite of the shearers, but these errant denizens of the camp do not by any means stand alone as trencher-men. The question of food for the permanent hands upon an estancia is a sufficiently weighty one when worked out in hard and fast avoirdupois. At certain estancias, for instance, each *peon's* family is supplied with an entire sheep every second day. The meat, once received, is neither bartered nor disposed of in any other fashion but that for which

it was intended—that of honest and painstaking home consumption. It is true that the luxury of vegetables is almost unknown amongst these folk. The diet is purely a meat one, corrected by the very admirable beverage of the *yerba maté*.

The following instance will give an idea of the extent to which the butcher's bill will mount up on a large estancia. Some years ago it was determined to free Las Cabezas in Entre Rios from the vizcachas, the prairies dogs that are characteristic of the country. The undertaking was of no little magnitude; but it was successfully carried out, and it is estimated that no less than half a million vizcachas were dug out from their holes in the earth and destroyed. The labour employed to this end cost five thousand pounds, and seven thousand sheep were consumed by the workers during the period that the operations lasted!

It might be thought that a certain generous obesity would wait upon the bodies of persons whose interiors are so largely receptive. Such a result, however, is exceedingly rare. Although the build of a certain proportion is solid to the point of heaviness, the typical gaucho is essentially of a lithe and spare make, and in no case does his strenuous life in the saddle permit the wearing of superfluous flesh. In his case it would seem that these tremendous quantities of mutton, and of beef—for he is not restricted to an ovine diet—act simply as necessary fuel for his tireless anatomical mechanism.

CHAPTER XIX

BAHIA BLANCA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The Plaza Constitucion—Ethics of the Great Southern Railway—Surburban Aspects—The Serra de Ventana—Picturesque Mountains—An Ideal Sheep Country—Hares—Southern Characteristics—Curious Tablelands—Tamarisk and Oak—Some Aspects of the Land—Huge Grain Elevators—Bahia Blanca—Appearance and Growth of the Town—Population—Importance as a Mercantile Centre—The Promise of the Future—Hotel Sud Americano—The English Club—Tramway Service.

THERE is something very impressive about the Plaza Constitucion, the terminus of the Great Southern Railway. Seen from without, the stately building that fronts the open square is sufficiently imposing; viewed from within, the place more than fulfils the promise of its exterior. There is a spaciousness here and a strictly ordered bustle that bespeaks the railway of importance, very sure of itself, its methods, and its officials. The waiting-rooms, the ticket-offices, the refreshment-rooms, and the book-stalls all breathe out the same atmosphere. In the world of railway companies there are undoubtedly terriers and greyhounds, whose conduct is reflected in their attitude and trains. The terrier yaps noisily to and fro, worrying to the right, barking to

the left, grinding to a halt with all four legs straining as breaks, then galvanised afresh into a further spasm of uproarious life—a merry, jostling creature of confined areas. The greyhound remains in dignified repose until the moment comes for him to stretch his long legs in a straight and rapid course to the horizon, and beyond it.

The Great Southern is a greyhound. The lengthy and well-appointed trains move out from the long platforms to the minute of their advertised time, attended by a staff of tranquil mannered and courteous attendants: upon the platforms themselves are other officials and mechanical devices in plenty to assist the traveller in finding his way. Everywhere there is a want of confusion and clamour, but it is a place where—in the language of the United States—things happen!

Bound for Bahia Blanca, it is from here that the wayfarer takes off. Once clear of the station, comfortably settled in one of the private apartments of the sleeping car, there is not a little to be noted in the neighbourhood of the capital. Banfield, where are situated the great locomotive works of the company, with the attendant town of model houses constructed for the employees; Lomas, the popular suburb largely frequented by the English; Temperley, with its sanatorium—in the neighbourhood of these centres, and more especially in that of Vicente Casares, farther on, are estancias, wooded and imposing to a quite unusual degree.

But, once clear of this, rolling along to the south-west, it must be admitted that the first half of the journey has little to show in the way of landscape that may distinguish it from any other run across the plains. Night may fall upon the broad stretches of rich land in descriptive metaphor as well as in actuality—which latter it does during the course of the journey.

The morning light reveals a scene such as one accustomed only to the northern plains would never expect so near at hand. The flat lands have fallen away completely. In their place are swelling green hills that rise to right and left in rather bolder fashion than the English downs. Scarring their surface, and accentuating their summits, are eruptions of stone that lend a distinctive character to the range. Here and there are streams that course downwards in thin silver threads. To the rear of the first hills are others, true mountains these, the granite tops of which stand out in daring jaggedness against the horizon, peaks and serrations stabbing the sky in a thousand places.

The train is speeding through the Serra de Ventana, the 'mountains of the window.' The range owes its name to a peculiar hole, cut raggedly by nature through one of its topmost peaks. Although its ramifications extend through much of the neighbouring country, the mountain group is an isolated one, sprouting up its frontiers abruptly from out of the plain. With its green slopes beneath,

RAILWAY STATION : PLAZA CONSTITUCIÓN

surmounted by the bold confusion above, the aspect of the valleys and ridges is sufficiently exhilarating. Indeed, it is a difficult matter to understand the absence of any pleasure or health resort in the very gracious spot. Yet, so far as I am aware, nothing of the kind has yet been established in the Serra de Ventana. The planting of a few acres of trees on one of the sites, midway up the slopes that are so rich in panorama; the founding of one of those gardens whose blooms it would seem necessary for the climate alone to cherish; the erection of the establishment itself in the immediate midst of such surroundings with the wilder wealth of nature beyond—all this could scarcely fail to attract the Buenos Aires magnate, who is as interested in the development of new resorts in his own country as he is in the discovery of fresh pleasure fields in Europe.

At present the Serra de Ventana, with all its hills and valleys and streams, represents to the town tourist an empty canvas that might well be filled in by the sanatorium or hotel purveyor. Lovers of nature and of the picturesque need not fear his advent. There is room in the range for a dozen such to enter without effecting any appreciable mark in the landscape.

Partaking of many of the characteristics both of the English South Downs and of New Zealand, it is obvious at the very first glimpse that the neighbourhood here constitutes an ideal country for sheep. It is, as a matter of fact, precisely for this that it

is most famed, as the numerous collections of white dots upon the hillsides testify. The almost entire absence of the thistle is noticeable, too; but, as compensation for this, hares, unknown in the neighbourhood of the capital, are darting in dozens across the pasture away from the proximity of the dreaded train.

So far as the works of man are concerned, the countryside is endowed with an unusual air of prosperity. The reed *ranchos*—those small, ragged-ended, picturesque structures that fringe the 'camp' towns in higher latitudes—are absent. Here, all such minor centres begin and end with sturdy, well-built brick buildings. Exactly the same want of the varied and the picturesque applies to the costume of the agriculturalist. The result is a solid and comfortable appearance in these respects that might lead to the supposition that the district exceeded the more northern country in wealth. An erroneous supposition, since, rich as it is, the land is no whit richer than the tremendously fertile northern plains. The distinctions are due merely to differences in climate, products, and to the presence of many foreigners.

In the meanwhile the train has been speeding onwards until it has all but reached the limits of the Serra de Ventana. To the right-hand side the peaks are still rising in lofty and jagged succession; but to the left the expiring efforts of the range have taken curious form. The summits have sunk downwards

into a remarkable series of tablelands. With their surfaces almost as level as though they had been shorn by a giant knife, and with the angle of their sides pared with an equal degree of precision, the appearance of the series is regular to the point of seeming artificiality. As geographical object-lessons they are not to be surpassed. Take a schoolboy to the neighbourhood of Bahia Blanca; show him these, and he will never fail to remember the significance of the term tableland, since for their description the word would naturally be the first to occur to him.

The final slopes of the Serra de Ventana have fallen away now. Yet the ground, as though inspired by the example of the mountains, does not reduce itself to the normal dead level of the pampa. Its gently undulating surface is marked by low knolls here and there. Rising and falling in sympathy are great yellow stretches of wheat, league upon league of the waving heads bursting out in triumph over the soil won from the sheep country.

By this time Bahia Blanca has drawn very near. It is reserved for Corti station, the last but one upon the way, to emphasise the new vegetation of this southern climate. The platform here is shaded by tamarisk and oak trees, the former a growth that is rapidly becoming part and parcel of Bahia Blanca. Thenceforth for a while the passage is through a country of curiously mixed attributes. Great salt lagoons spread their waters in glittering

sheets. Cheek by jowl with the brackish pools and their useless shores are verdant and thriving plantations. Vineyards and groves of pine and tamarisk are almost sufficiently close to throw their shadows on the waters themselves. Never were sterility and abundance closer neighbours.

Now, although extremely remote, comes the first evidence of the great southern port. Two distinct blocks stand out upon the far horizon, even at this distance obviously huge in size. As the train draws nearer, either solid mass resolves itself little by little into lines and tracery at the summit. At length the serried towers stand out clearly on the roofs of the two great grain elevators. Visible for miles ere the town itself condescends to give the faintest hint of its presence beneath, they stand as colossal monuments, landmarks worthy even of the almost fabulous progress of the south.

The train is running again through a tract of white sand, dotted thickly with salt-bush and other grey-green growths characteristic of the soil. More tamarisk and more vineyards, and then the first houses of Bahia Blanca come into view. An outlying suburb of brick buildings and tin shanties, the majority of which are merely for temporary occupation, the place affords no clue whatever to the character of the main town. A short stretch of open country again, followed by groves of tamarisk of a far greater height and size than any of the preceding, then the imposing buildings of the central

town are at hand on either side, and the train slows down in its steady gliding to pull up within the station.

The sight of Bahia Blanca is apt to cause less surprise in the traveller who sees it for the first time than in the one who has known the place some four or five years previously. To the newcomer the plazas and broad streets and avenues appear very admirable, but possess no special significance beyond standing as evidence of wealth and of a thriving existence. Yet the difference between the present and the immediate past is greater here and has been more rapidly brought about than in the case of any other Argentine town. Less than half a dozen years ago Bahia Blanca possessed little beyond a single street of any importance whatever. Now the great thoroughfares cross each other and spread out in parallel lines over an area that bids fair soon to challenge in magnitude that of any other in the Republic, with the exception of the capital itself.

Mere size, however, is not necessarily a proof of commercial importance. Putting aside for the moment the direct mercantile assets, such as its docks and elevators, the quality of the Bahia Blanca buildings is even more eloquent of prosperity than is the extent of the town. Banks and offices, private houses and hotels—all are spacious and imposing; modern to a degree, moreover, as stands to reason when the recent date of their erection is considered.

Concerning extent and population it is difficult to speak with certainty. The place is as slippery as an eel in the hands of a would-be statistician. No sooner has he thought to pin it down to definite figures in this respect than the irritating place has wriggled through his fingers and beyond him. That which stands for June will not be correct for December, and the following six months will probably have minimised to a startling extent all that went before. Thus the last census of the population, effected in 1906, gives the number of inhabitants as twenty-five thousand. But the four years that have elapsed render this figure altogether worthless. It is by no means improbable that the population has doubled itself during the interval.

The importance of Bahia Blanca as a railway centre has increased in proportion to the mercantile growth of the town. In addition to the three distinct lines of the Great Southern that serve it, the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway has come down from the north-west to link the spot with the inland central districts. The Great Southern, for their part, have stretched out to the west, and have completed a line to Neuquen that must undoubtedly revolutionise the history of that hitherto unduly neglected neighbourhood. Indeed, Bahia Blanca already serves as the outlet for a wealth of produce that would never have known existence but for the uprising of the port. Since there still remains a far greater district yet to be tapped, the city

undoubtedly stands merely at the first heyday of youth in its career.

An interesting point in the growth of the city is that its development has continued entirely unaffected by a recent era of comparatively slender harvests. Exceptional droughts and spells of unfavourable weather have left their mark upon estancia and estanciero alike. Yet Bahia Blanca, fed by the ever-broadening new lands, has progressed at an increasing rate in sublime disregard of troubles that were local rather than general.

As it is, the inhabitants go the length of professing themselves dissatisfied. It is their complaint that, had it not been for these unpropitious seasons, the town would already have taken that tremendous forward leap which, they assert, inevitably lies before it—a progress of the future beside which that already achieved must sink into nothingness. From which it may be judged that abundance of success breeds gluttons of the phase.

There are now a number of good hotels at Bahia Blanca. The largest and best of these is the Hotel Sud Americano, owned and directed by the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway. The establishment, of recent construction, may certainly take rank among the first half-dozen in the Republic, including those of the capital itself, and in comfort it is second to none of them. The building is on a very large scale, and the service and *cuisine* are excellently managed. An admirable orchestra,

moreover, plays during meals and at intervals throughout the day.

I have expended many adjectives on this establishment, since surely the advent of first-class hotels must be of great benefit not only to the welfare of the country, but also to that of the travellers within it. It is not only those stickers to the well-beaten paths that are capable of appreciating an institution of the kind. On the contrary, an experience of the dubious delights offered by 'camp' inns and the like tends very emphatically to accentuate the charms of the up-to-date hotel—when it is to be met with! So far as the Sud Americano is concerned, its size and appointments would seem so far to have exceeded even the requirements of Bahia Blanca. But it is unlikely that the rapid growth of the port will permit this state of affairs to continue for long.

Amongst the attractions of Bahia Blanca is an English Club, conducted on very excellent lines, where the numerous British estancieros of the district come together with their town-dwelling fellow-countrymen. In one respect alone does the southern port lag behind the other important cities of the Republic. So far the streets know nothing of electric traction, the tramcars being drawn by the older fashioned and somewhat cumbrous steam locomotives. But in a town of such rapid metamorphosis it would be dangerous to speculate upon how long this method of conveyance is likely to hold good.

CHAPTER XX

BAHIA BLANCA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS (*continued*)

First Beginnings of the Town—Wind and Dust—The Port—The Liverpool of Argentina—Land and its Values—Fortunate Investments—The *Puerto Militar*—Benefits of Tamarisk—A Sheltering Vegetation—The Official Town—Argentine War-vessels and their Crews—Training of the Sailors—Accommodation of the Officers—The Hospital and *Jefetura*—Panorama of the Naval Port—The Inevitable Dreadnoughts.

It is only natural to suppose that the original settlers in Bahia Blanca had no conception of the future of the place. Indeed, one may take it for granted that they gave no thought at all to the matter. It is probable that their present was amply sufficient for their mental exercise, and that their sole hope for the future was for good and all to see the back of the desolate and bleak spot; for the beginning of the city was one small fort, from which point of vantage the garrison waged war with the marauding Indians eighty years ago.

The men with the flintlocks and the ragged apologies for uniforms, with which the unstable government of the period alone could provide them, doubtless swore at the climate of the place with every one of those eloquent, resounding curses

that the Castilian language can bring to bear. Bending their heads beneath the force of a more than usually violent dust-storm as it came, sweeping and howling across the dunes, they must frequently have prayed for a lull, or even for a sight of their Indian enemies as the lesser evil of the two.

Bahia Blanca has ever borne a reputation for wind and dust. In these days of the influence of humanity over climate the innumerable tree plantations have already reduced the latter, though not the former, and it is probable that a few further years will see the nuisance abated to a yet more considerable degree.

The town, lying amidst the sand-dunes that are thus annually becoming more green, is situated at some distance from the actual port. The half-dozen miles that separate Ingeniero White and Puerto Galvan, the docks respectively of the Great Southern and Buenos Aires and Pacific, from the main city are traversed by means of the railway. At Ingeniero White is an enormous power-house that serves the cranes and all the other mechanical appliances on the quays, whilst in the water near by are ingenious contrivances, floating grain elevators that can be moved from point to point.

It is upon the water-side here, too, that tower the gigantic structures of the two principal elevators. It is only an intimate acquaintance with the spot itself that reveals the fact that, although leaping up to meet the eye so long before the town itself

is sighted, the great buildings are in reality some half-dozen miles to the far side of it when approached from inland. As for the interiors, they are contrived, of course, on the same pattern as those of all other such modern erections—each great floor area pierced by the iron shafts, and tunnels through which the restless rivers of grain flow.

It is to this point and to Puerto Galvan, the equally progressive port of the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway, that the ocean steamers are arriving in ever-increasing numbers. Locally, the port is popularly known as the Liverpool of Argentina. In this case the term is fitting enough, and applies well to both the energy and enterprise displayed. It cannot be said, however, that such borrowings of nomenclature are equally happy in every instance. Enthusiasm is apt to lead to a dangerous misuse of this facile labelling. For instance, when in Paraguay, I chanced to hear exactly the same comparison applied to the river port of Concepcion. The occasion was the meeting of two river steamers that came to their moorings in the neighbourhood of the only war vessel (to be frank, a converted tug) that flies the Paraguayan flag. Stirred by the simultaneous sight of the three vessels, an ardent Paraguayan in all earnestness dubbed the place the Liverpool of Paraguay! And it is by no means unlikely that, with Liverpool out of all protesting range, the name may continue and flourish.

To conclude with the commercial aspects of Bahia

Blanca, the town, together with its surroundings, has undoubtedly proved one of the scenes where fortunes from the purchase of land have been most rapidly made. So far as the town itself is concerned, the phase has been sufficiently marked to amount almost to a romance. As the city has spread outwards in successive eddies of brick, the soil upon the outskirts has risen in price in many instances from so many centavos the square metre to a value that represents an almost equal number of dollars. Consider the state of mind of an up-to-date English chancellor of the exchequer let loose in such a place, where unearned increment is written large upon every brick! The term, as a matter of fact, is as unknown in the land as is the material state of starvation.

For all its importance, the interest of Bahia Blanca does not end with its mercantile status. As a naval port and the arsenal of the Republic, it attracts a more general attention than its commercial aspects alone could claim. The *Puerto Militar*—the military port—possesses this distinct advantage over that of the capital itself in that it can be entered by vessels of greater draught than the comparatively shallow waters of the La Plata river permit. Situated some twenty-five miles from Bahia Blanca itself, it is connected with the town by means of a strategic railway.

Thanks to the courtesy of the admiral in command and to that of his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant

Antonio B. Nieva, it was my good fortune to see more of the *Puerto Militar* than is granted to most foreigners. Alighting at the official station, the evidences of a naval port are immediately forthcoming. The white summer uniforms of the sailors are to the left and right and everywhere, and a general trimness about the appearance of the spot betokens official care.

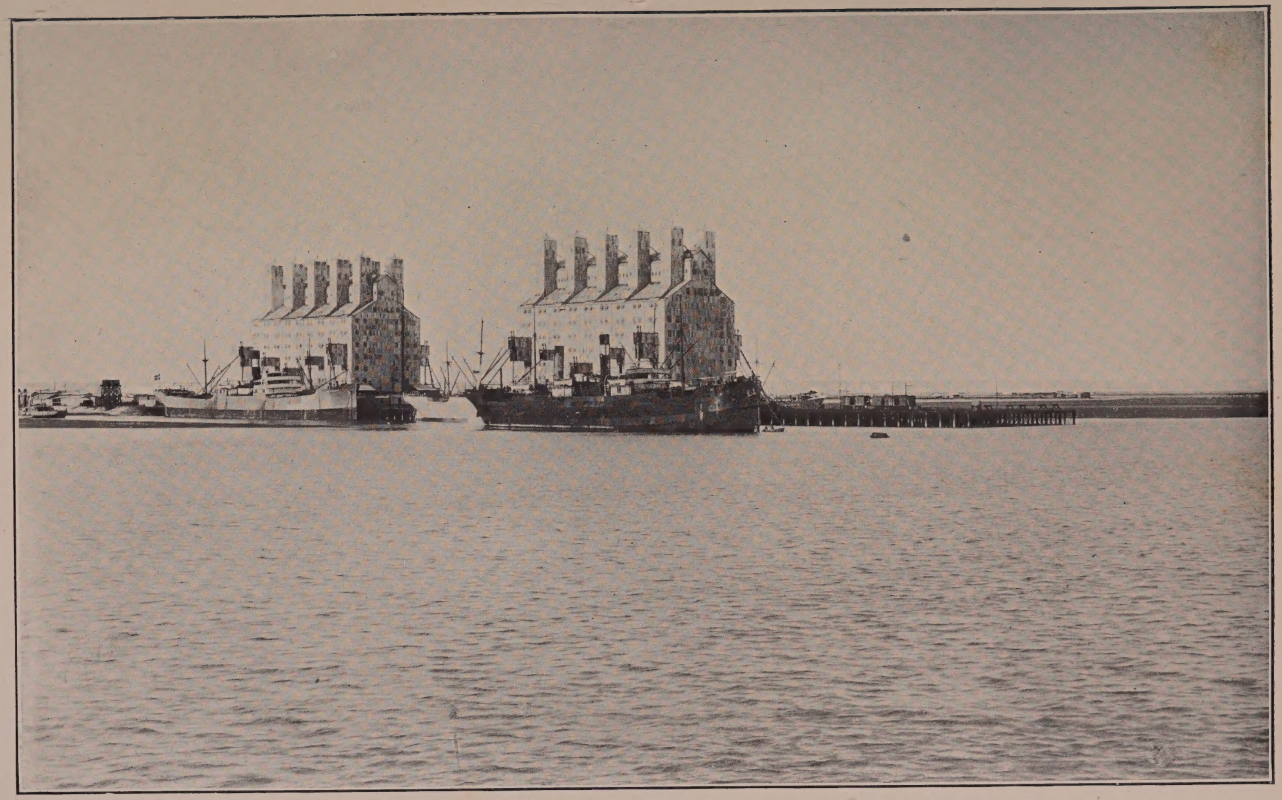
Nothing of the government establishment, however, is visible from the station itself. To attain to this it is necessary to drive the length of one of the broad tamarisk-lined avenues that lead from the spot. Indeed, it is only when in the midst of this verdure that the true benefits brought about by the importation of the tree become clear. In size it is not to be compared with the lowly specimens that exist on our own south coast. Exceeding in magnitude even those upon the eastern Mediterranean shores, the trees here raise their heads proudly to a height of twenty or thirty feet. The result would lead the stranger to suppose that each avenue had been pierced through the dense wealth of greenery, whereas in reality the closely-set tamarisk walls have only been induced to sprout up and to line the ways within the last half-dozen years.

Here and there are groups of eucalyptus; but it is the universal tamarisk that gives the keynote of the place. Pressing forward to shade the white roads, falling back to spread into a series of actual woods, the visitor—to say nothing of the inhabitant

—cannot fail to look with gratitude upon the feathery green masses. Without them, the place would be as the outer sand-dunes are yet—sun-scorched and wind-swept at the same time, with the smoky dust clouds sweeping furiously along in all the torturing revelry of their myriad particles. Here there is shade and shelter both, and as for the sand, bereft of its windy motive power, it has, perforce, to lie dormant beneath the verdure that holds it in subjection.

As I have already had occasion to mention, the tamarisk tree has become characteristic of Bahia Blanca ; but in no other spot has it been encouraged to thrive to such a degree as here. Had it effected nothing else, the naval department would still have claimed the country's recognition for the magnitude of this work alone. The avenues, moreover—military roads, in reality—are well planned, and are magnificently illuminated at night by electric light.

After a few minutes' drive along the main avenue the first of the official residences come in sight. Within the zone here, by the way, being strictly naval, civilians are not permitted to dwell. In the neighbourhood of the pretty bungalows the ubiquitous tamarisk, cut and trimmed, has been impressed to serve for hedging purposes, and stands guard over the numerous flowers in the small gardens. As for the officials themselves, a very short experience suffices to prove that the colony is



GRAIN ELEVATORS: BAHIA BLANCA

indeed a pleasant one. Shut off to a great extent from the cosmopolitan gaieties of the capital, it has become fertile in its own resources. There are tennis courts amidst the green tamarisk walls, 'bridge' in the pleasant shade of verandahs, and a multitude beyond of those general amusements without which effective work is impossible.

All this, however, is but the outer fringe that guards the dockyard and arsenal that have brought the colony into being. Passing out from the shade of the verdure, one comes almost without warning to a world of massive buildings, and of wharves upon which locomotives and trucks are steaming to and fro. At the moment there are four warships in dock, the *General Belgrano*, *Pueyrredón*, *General San Martin*, and *Garibaldi*. Sister ships all, the average displacement of the four is slightly less than seven thousand tons. Aboard of the *Pueyrredón*, the first to be visited, various squads are being drilled upon the main deck, and the smartness displayed is commendable—surprising even in those whose early youth was spent far inland in the *campo*.

In another part of the vessel a school of instruction is proceeding, the course aided by the help of blackboards. A conscript may enter the navy as an illiterate—the number is small enough in these days of universal education—but he will leave it in quite another case; for, in addition to the necessary technical knowledge of his profession,

each Argentine sailor receives the benefit of a general education, should he stand in need of it. Thus, at the end of his term of service, he is in any case a smarter man than before and the master of the three R's.

After an inspection of a gun's crew engaged in manipulating one of the big weapons ensues a visit to the wardroom and to the officers' cabins. Spacious as is the former, the accommodation for the officers is exceptionally good. With a bath-room attached to each roomy cabin, and with fittings and furniture of most convenient pattern, there can be no doubt that the comfort of an Argentine naval officer, when at sea, leaves little to be desired. In all of these vessels the captain's quarters are particularly imposing, the chief room in each being the sternmost, containing a couple of quick-firing guns so elaborately polished as to become a fitting part and parcel of the remaining, and less warlike, furniture.

From the spot where the vessels are lying to the shore hospital is a short step. Set in the midst of well-kept gardens, the wards here are cheerful and bright to a degree. It was explained that every possible means had been attempted to this end, since the progress of both sickness and convalescence was undoubtedly affected by the nature of the invalids' surroundings. To the credit of the organisers be it said that the attempt had met with marked success, and the patients in the large,

airy wards, moreover, had all the appearance of being well cared for.

In the near neighbourhood of the hospital is the *Jefetura*, the building in which are situated the offices of the admiral and of the other high officials of the port. Here, amongst other insignia, are kept the battle-flags of many of the warships, gorgeous ensigns in silk so cunningly contrived by patriotic ladies of the land that the condition of the fair workers' fingers at the end of the task cannot be envied. Each of these sacred emblems is kept in a massive wooden casket, every inch of the surface of which is carved into elaborate designs.

The *Jefetura* is surmounted by a lofty tower. Having once mounted to the top—a process that is more easily described than achieved—by means of a spiral staircase, the entire panorama of the naval port spreads itself obligingly beneath. From here the general contour of the coast, with the protective sand banks jutting out to sea, becomes clearly evident for the first time. From here, too, can be seen the operations towards the completion of the new commercial harbour that are being actively carried out by a French company. Along the coast is the chain of forts and the strategic lines of railway; and there, upon the horizon, are the twin elevators, dominating the commercial port, that nothing short of an earthquake would seem able to separate from the landscape of the entire district!

Down the spiral staircase again and back to where the arsenal itself fronts the waiting warships, giving out its thuddings of steam hammers and its clangings of steel and iron. Then to the dry dock and to the pump house beside it that can empty the great tank of its waters in less than a couple of hours. Amply sufficient as is the dock for present needs, a new and far larger substitute is about to be constructed; for Argentina has found it necessary to go in the way of other South American Republics and of European Powers as well. She has already ordered the inevitable 'Dreadnoughts,' and is thus adding her premium to the world's fire insurance. In any case, the wealth that lies within her boundaries fully justifies the new protective departure: the lateness of the decision, moreover, is sufficient in itself to prove that the policy involved is defence, not defiance.

CHAPTER XXI

BAHIA BLANCA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS (*continued*)

Don Juan Antonio Argerich—His Work and Attainments—The Argerich Estancias—'La Gleba'—A Vast Experiment in Horticulture—System of Irrigation—Variety of Growths—The Meetings of Flora from all Continents—A Centre of Science—Chicken-farming—La Fina—Sainfoin—Nature, Crude and Cultivated—A Reminiscence of Darwin—The Past and the Present—*Salitrales*—A Strange Phenomenon—The *Sombra de Toro*—Gauchos on the Move—The Lights of Bahia Blanca.

As one of those more especially concerned with the interests of Bahia Blanca and the south, Don Juan Antonio Argerich bears a name that deserves recognition outside the limits of the Republic, in which country it carries an unusual degree of well-deserved weight. To combine a profession and an art with politics and an active interest in agriculture and breeding is given to few, even in less busy lands than Argentina. Yet Don Antonio Argerich, to give him his more curt and familiar name, has not only devoted himself to all these four, but—infinitely more remarkable—he has achieved celebrity in each. As a barrister, he is the acknowledged chief expert on commercial and criminal law; as a student, he

has held professorships of literature for many years; as a politician, he stands as one of the leading and most influential deputies; and, finally, as an agriculturist, his name is now associated with an astonishing number of important experiments.

In Argentina itself, where his volumes, speeches, and general work have met with widespread recognition, the last thing in the world that is necessary is an apology for a lengthy description of the well-known barrister's feats. At this distance, however, it is perhaps necessary to explain the reason of this exceptional devotion of space to an individual in a book that deals with the mass rather than with particular persons. In the first place, Don Antonio takes pride in his claim that he is a pure production of the country. A descendant of a family that for centuries has rendered intellectual service to Argentina, he has remained all his life within his own land, and has never crossed the ocean to take his part in a European curriculum. Homer and Horace and Virgil are strangers to the *campo*, it might be believed—and generally with reason. It is seldom that quotations from Chaucer and Spenser, or even Shakespeare, worry the busy air of Buenos Aires. Yet these you will get without stint from Don Antonio, and reasoned discourses on the influences of the giants as well. But when Longfellow, Stevenson, Kipling follow, and a great and equally heterogenous host of others whose books might well be imagined as almost closed to those of Spanish tongue,

FISHING BOATS: MAR DEL PLATA

there is surely far greater reason for admiration yet. The true appreciation of this is necessarily left to the British ; amongst his own people it is for his essays, philosophical and political, that he is best known.

So much for one side of the eminent Argentine's temperament. For an insight into a couple of the others it is necessary to enter the chamber of deputies or the law courts, in both of which institutions he has rendered distinguished service for a number of years. There yet remains the land—tenure of the soil is essential to a leader in so agricultural a country, and Don Antonio holds sufficient to ensure him a very serious stake in the Republic. Owning estancias ranging in size from many leagues down to a single one, the farming instincts of his race are given full play here. From the whirl of politics and oratory to the tranquillity of the *campo* is a far cry. Yet, with true Argentine enthusiasm, Don Antonio will assert that his chief desire, after that for the happiness of his family, is for the growth of his trees. Which brings us to the work he is effecting in the south.

Although far from the largest, the most interesting of Don Juan Antonio Argerich's estancias lies some dozen miles inland of Bahia Blanca. Three of these properties are situated within a convenient radius of the youthful township of Argerich—a growing and promising urban youngster, for which the deputy stands in the light of godfather.

Of these three the one known as 'La Gleba' must

be taken first, not only for its intrinsic importance, but also for the fact that the system on which the property is being developed is unique in the country. 'La Gleba,' though its dimensions exceed a league, is probably the only property of any size where cattle and sheep not only fail to tread in any numbers, but are relegated to the background as items of comparatively small importance. The estancia, as a matter of fact, represents a vast experiment.

Approaching the place from Argerich station, the unusual number of powerful windmill pumps that surround the great cluster of buildings, the centre of the estate, suffices to warn the newcomer that some out-of-the-ordinary methods of working are before him. It is to the presence of these pumps, the operation of many increased by motor power, that the success of the experimental ventures is due.

No more than three years ago the sandy soil of the place was productive of nothing beyond pampa grass and coarse weeds, fitting to the somewhat arid condition of the spot in its original state. Now, beneath the benevolent force of irrigation, the estancia has blossomed out into a nursery the comprehensiveness of whose growths it would be difficult to rival in any other part. Indeed, as the home of an experiment concerning the range of trees and plants that will consent to flourish together within a league of Argentine soil, 'La Gleba' presents an interest that renders unnecessary any apology for a lengthy description.

At the outset it should be explained that the nature of the landscape here favours irrigation to a degree that is impossible in the almost dead level of the more northern pampa. As for the low hills and hummocks that abound in this neighbourhood of Bahia Blanca, their aquatic switchback possibilities have been utilised to the utmost. For the evidence of this it is merely necessary to follow the course of the water as it emerges at the rate of some twelve thousand litres an hour from the well. Gushing out to the accompaniment of the motor's throbbing, it is borne within its great pipe to the special reservoir fed by that particular well. Here upon rising ground, three hundred tons of water are confined, hedged about by corrugated iron walls. It has now, as it were, been brought into a strategic position whence it can descend to destroy the aridity that is its natural enemy.

Even now it has been set to work. Leaping downwards from its point of vantage through the outward radiating pipes, it bursts out at the end of each in a clear stream. At this point it comes into actual contact with the soil, hemmed within the narrow channels grooved out to right and left for its passage. The earth—to all appearances pure sand that, when handled, slips through the fingers in the accepted fashion of the hour-glass material—sucks greedily at the first of the flood as though in a vain effort to stay the current altogether. Follow the running water, and you will see for yourself to

what varied uses the estancia has been put by its help!

First through a vineyard. As though rejoicing in the cool shade of the broad green leaves set about their brown stems, innumerable watery ramifications break off here from the main stream, and proceed in parallel lines between the rows of vines. Having left its contribution to water and refresh the twenty acre vineyard, the stream hastens further downhill to distribute liquid encouragement to field upon field of sprouting asparagus. Then through other vine slopes to areas covered with strawberry, tomato, and all varieties of European vegetables, down to the humble and essential cabbage and potato.

In the meanwhile a second main stream, with another deposit for its source, is welling its way in an opposite direction. Its course lies through an area of growths more varied than that of the first. Peach, nectarine, and almond trees greet it almost as soon as it has started on its way. Then it has passed through a tentative plantation of English wild rose to stretches covered thickly with melon, cucumber, vegetable marrow, and pumpkin.

Edging beyond these, the stream has passed to a district addicted to the more daring culture of northern flora. Apple orchards, cherry plantations, and holly groves prepare the way for the northern forest trees, and the young beech, oak, and ash follow each other in turn. Through lupin fields to walnut, quince, pear, and olive, with rows of

eucalyptus, tamarisk, poplar, and willow in between —it is impossible to do the place justice if only from the mere tedium of names that its full description would involve.

The potting houses, with their tens of thousands of young plants in pots, speak eloquently of the manner in which the far corners of the earth have been ransacked in order that specimens, hitherto unacquainted with Argentine soil, may take their place, and thrive or fail. To the credit of the judgment involved, let it be said that astonishingly few plants have fallen within the latter category, although the wattlebark has arrived here from its far-away home to take its place by the side of pines from the Hartz mountains, cherries from the Crimea, and young shoots from Japan and other places equally remote.

If for no other reason than for the value of its experiments the work that is being carried on at 'La Gleba' is of national importance. Indeed, this has already been recognised by the government to the extent that it has founded an experimental station of its own in the immediate neighbourhood that, while watching the results achieved by Don Juan Antonio Argerich, is conducting at the same time a system of trials of its own.

Thus it is that 'La Gleba' has become a scientific centre where the newly-arrived flora are nursed and watched with all the care that is the due of tender youngsters taken for the first time from their mother

country to a strange clime. Naturally, there is argument and debate—likewise children, if only of enthusiasm—not only as to the welfare of those plants that are already present, but also as to the possibilities of others that have hitherto remained strangers, and to whom it is proposed to issue an invitation to partake of Argerich soil. Indeed, the advent of one of these only occurs after numerous consultations and dippings into the technical library that is attached to the place. It is to this care the success of so many of the experiments undoubtedly may be attributed.

The magnitude of the work carried on at Argerich may be gauged from the fact that during the past three years no less than three million plants have found a place in the hospitable soil of the estancia Even when considered in relation to the astonishing rate at which progress is being conducted in Argentina, this figure is undoubtedly extraordinary, more especially when the great variety of the plantations is considered. Although the outskirts of the estancia abound in very rich alfalfa, its chief and more costly working has been brought about in a purely patriotic and scientific spirit. So unexpectedly successful, however, has proved the growth and propagation of the trees and plants that the venture promises financial success in addition to scientific reward.

Chicken breeding has been introduced at 'La Gleba' on an extensive scale, and the industry is carried on in as modern a fashion as that of its

CUTTING ON THE PRINGLES EXTENSION : GREAT SOUTHERN RAILWAY

other branches. The latest devices are employed here, and if the birds fail to render adequate tribute in the way of eggs it must be because they are miserly creatures devoid of the faintest sense of gratitude. For one thing, in the centre of the chicken precincts is a great red brick building which serves solely for the purpose of a hospital for ailing hens. During my stay, however, none of the pedigree Plymouth Rock fowls recently installed at the spot had given cause for medical attendance. So far as the financial results of the breeding are concerned, although the promise was good, the origin of the enterprise was too recent to afford a definite verdict.

Some two leagues distant from 'La Gleba' is 'La Fina,' another Argerich estancia. This latter, however, in contrast to the former, is devoted to the more ordinary agricultural purposes, with one notable exception. For the first time in the history of Argentina, sainfoin, imported from Italy, has been introduced into its soil here. When I saw it, the plant, sown two months previously, was sprouting in the most vigorous and healthy fashion, and bade fair to render an overflowing harvest. Should this new importation meet with ultimate and permanent success, its influence upon Argentine agriculture cannot fail to be a matter of the highest importance.

The remaining interest in 'La Fina,' with the exception of a very flourishing chicken farm, is centred in the production of maize and wheat.

Beyond the area of both flourishing crops a small portion of the estancia yet remains to be cleared. The contrast in landscape thus afforded is sufficiently instructive as to the aspects of the past and of the future—smooth sweeps of green and yellow on the one hand, rising and falling in unbroken gentle curves; on the other, the ragged edges and broken horizon of the *monte*, whose trees and low scrub are receding farther and farther beneath the genial advance of the yellow and green tide. It is worthy of note that, although this estancia is a brand new one that has known existence for less than a year, the area of its wheat crop already exceeds a thousand acres, while another hundred are laid down in maize; and oats, in turn, claim rather less than this.

In company with the Messrs. Santiago and Miguel Murphy, of 'La Gleba,' and Mr. Santiago Ham, of 'La Fina'—gentlemen who are connected with Don Antonio and whose Irish forefathers had settled in Argentina, as the mixture of nomenclature will show—it was my good fortune to drive over much of this country in the neighbourhood of Bahia Blanca.

The surroundings of the place are redolent of the memory of the great Darwin, who nearly eighty years ago found much of interest in the spot. So far as human interest is concerned, it was a very different Bahia Blanca then to the one that now exists. In the great naturalist's own words:

'Bahia Blanca scarcely deserves the name of a village. A few houses and the barracks for the troops are enclosed by a deep ditch and fortified wall. The settlement is only one of recent standing (since 1828); and its growth has been one of trouble. The government of Buenos Aires unjustly occupied it by force, instead of following the wise example of the Spanish Viceroys, who purchased the land near the older settlement of the Rio Negro from the Indians. Hence the need of the fortifications; hence the few houses and little cultivated land without the limits of the walls; even the cattle are not safe from the attacks of the Indians beyond the boundaries of the plain on which the fortress stands.'

It is evident from this that Darwin was privileged to witness the first infancy of the town. The Indian terror was no hysterical matter, but a very genuine menace. Darwin himself was present when the gun boomed out from the fort in warning of an attack (in this case a false alarm), and the guide who accompanied him had two months previously been the sole survivor of three who had suddenly been attacked by a band of the dusky, lance-bearing horsemen. But such catastrophes formed part of the normal life of the period, when the deer abounded close at hand and the puma prowled up almost to the walls of the fort.

Such contretemps, in any case, were doubtless of small account to Darwin, who had lit here on a field astonishingly rich in fossil bones and skeletons

of the mighty antediluvian creatures whose tread once shook the earth of the plains. The harvest of the relics of the megatherium, mylodon, and of the kindred and lesser animals was of an abundance that induced the scientist for a while to forsake his floating home the *Beagle* and to journey to Buenos Aires overland—no light task at that period. It was certainly worth the trouble, since 'the remains of . . . nine great quadrupeds, and many detached bones were found embedded on the beach, within the space of about 200 yards square.'

The armed Indians are now no more; the puma is likewise a thing of the past, and wheat-fields, plantations, and vineyards cover much of the soil that, arid as it was at the time of his visit, Darwin held as unfruitful and of no account. Yet there are portions of the land that still remain much as he described them.

For one thing, the great dry lakes of salt, the *salitrales*, to which he makes a passing, but astonished, reference, are still as he saw them. Nothing, it is to be imagined, but some natural upheaval will prevent them from remaining for all time. The broad white expanses, with their unbroken, smooth surface, stand out in the most curious fashion from the surrounding bush-covered tracts of green. To drive across one of these, especially towards the close of day, is to know a picture of Siberia, minus the cold. It is, indeed, difficult to realise in the fading light that it is not snow into which the

horses' hoofs thud gently and over which the wheels pass almost without sound. The illusion, too, is heightened by the trail the carriage leaves behind —the deep ruts ploughed up by the wheels, and the trampled confusion where the horses have trod— tracks beaten out clearly and distinctly from the smooth field of virgin white. Bad places, these, for a malefactor to cross in his flight, since his traces here are not only as distinct as though in snow, but infinitely more permanent in addition.

By far the most curious of all these *salitrales* that I saw was situated on the 'La Fina' estancia. Its sides began in perfectly even fashion on the first downward slopes of a vast hollow, forming a perfect oval track, in the centre of which was a patch of green bushes, many acres in extent, shaped in an oval as well, to preserve the symmetrical proportions of the whole. As a natural phenomenon the appearance of the smooth, clean-cut, accurate ring was extraordinary. With its gentle and precise gradient towards the centre maintained throughout, its island of green in the centre, and its level upper slopes, the amphitheatre might have been engineered by the labour of some tens of thousands of workfolk, a creation of man, in fact, and thus granted perhaps a poorer compliment than it deserves. In any case, when the four horses, admirably driven, have pulled the swaying carriage down across the upper slopes, and speed round the white track, flinging up the queer soil in solid bits where mere powder

would have been expected, the practical uses to which it might be put occur very vividly. As a racecourse the arena would be unique and unsurpassable. It is probably as well for the romantic and æsthetic features of the spot that it lies so far from the populous centres.

Clambering up the sides of this strange *salitral*, the four horses proceed at a swinging pace upon their way again, careering now through a *monte* that abounds in the *sombra de toro* tree, many specimens of which have attained to a height quite unusual for the district. The bull's shade tree, to translate the name literally, is characteristic of the country. With a hard, diamond-shaped leaf that, though prickly, is not indented, and ornamented by numerous red berries, it bears some faint resemblance to a holly at the first glimpse. It is the most imposing growth in the *montes* of the district.

The way is through open pasture country now, and with the fall of evening the dark forms of the vizcachas, the prairie dogs, have come out to punctuate the mouths of their burrows. Then all at once a quite unexpected domestic scene has come into being. A Gaucho family is on the move. Two men are advancing on horseback, while a third horse strides forward abreast of the others, dragging behind it a crude sledge. Two chairs have been placed upon the sledge, and upon these again are seated a woman and a tiny girl. It is evident that the chairs constitute the principal and heaviest

furniture of the household. In front of them are spread blankets and a few household utensils.

As they pass, ' Buenos Noches ' comes from them in quiet greeting across the still evening air. It is a very humble family this, and a very attenuated moving ; but poverty is no bar to courtesy for all that, and in the case of this class still less to pride. As to their destination, who can tell it, since they are probably as vague as the merest stranger on the point! To-night at all events they will camp in the open at the first favourable spot that offers itself when the inclination takes them to rest. So they go through the solitudes, coming out of the dusk to take shadowlike shape for a while, then onward into the dusk again, and so out of sight.

The four horses, guided by a hand as unerring in the darkness as in the daylight, have mounted one of the numerous elevations that are characteristic of the neighbourhood. Upon the horizon is a long line of brilliant lights. Bahia Blanca is over a score of miles distant, yet its illumination is perfectly clear and distinct, standing out quite alone in its level row from the night in a way that is strongly suggestive of the lights of an anchored liner. One may travel for leagues on either side, and farther inland as well, but from every swelling point of ground the line of light is inevitably to be seen, shining out through the darkness in as characteristic a fashion as the grain elevators soar upwards to catch the eye by day.

CHAPTER XXII

TO THE NORTH BY STREAM

The *Darsena Sud*—Scene at the Docks—The *San Martin*—An Incident at the Start—Aspects of the La Plata River—Cosmopolitan Passengers—Some Knights-errant of Labour—The Fires of the *Campo*—Rosario—Flies as Food for Chickens—Mirage—A Stranded Craft.

THE journey from Buenos Aires to the northern frontiers of the Republic I give in narrative form—not that this more pretentious method is justified by any spice of danger or unpleasant adventure. On the contrary, the precincts of the spacious river steamer that accomplished the voyage were productive of many ordinary comforts to the exclusion of any tragic or especially thrilling happenings. Yet the wealth of incident was so great, and the change of scene so kaleidoscopic with the nearer approach to the tropics, that any less pretentious mode of narration would necessarily leave many details untold. And upon such a journey it is surely the details that count.

It was on a late November morning that we drove from the Plaza Hotel to the *Darsena Sud*—the particular set of docks in which are wont to halt

the fleets of river steamers that ply between Monte Video, at the great stream's mouth, and the Brazilian forests and hills to the far north. Seeing that late spring was already merging into summer, the heat should have been considerable even at half-past six in the morning. But even such a climate as that of Buenos Aires condescends to vagaries. Its display of sunshine may be counted on as a consistent asset ; in degrees of heat, however, it gambles as recklessly as a *peon* with his weekly wages.

Thus this morning, with the tall houses pricking upwards between the roadways and the sunrays, there was need for heavy overcoats to shut out the cutting chill of the early air. The majority of pedestrians, realising that this phase of the weather is but fleeting, had ventured out in the ordinary light clothes of the season. Processions of workmen went by, a little blue in their industrious search of the early worm, while the policemen on point duty paced, stamping, up and down, casting reproachful glances at their smart white summer uniforms.

Once arrived at the docks, the open spaces were already enveloped in the full blaze of sunshine. Fringing the wharves was a long line of steamers, graceful, rakish-looking craft, each with its series of broad white decks, and each with the white M pricked out on its black funnel that marks it as a possession of Mihanovich, the king of traffic upon the system of these great rivers.

The *San Martin* already had steam up, as the

light clouds emerging from her funnel proved—unlike some of her larger sisters, she possessed but a single one of these smoking appendages. Upon the decks and upon the wharves were the usual groups, who presently began to wave their mutual farewells in the wonted fashion, amid the clamourings of the inevitable tin-type photographers, anxious for a small consideration to impress the features of the departing yet more indelibly upon the minds of their stay-at-home friends.

A couple of those innumerable tugs that, each with the distinctive white M upon its funnel, went bustling up and down the crowded lane of water, were already straining at the *San Martin* by means of their hawsers. Then the paddle-wheels of the vessel itself began to churn. The river steamer had fairly started on the first and most intricate portion of her journey.

The passage of the congested stream is at all times difficult; on this occasion it was not accomplished without incident. From somewhere out of the throng of small craft that went in devious procession between the two lines of ocean-going steamers emerged a tug towing a great coal barge with reckless speed. The tug itself, aware too late that it was charging directly upon the impressive mass of the river steamer, swerved so far as the limited free area would permit, and backed with all the furious fussiness of its tribe. Not so the coal barge. Poor helpless thing, fatally obedient to its

own momentum, it came on to its doom, right beneath the paddle-box of the steamer.

A shock, a grinding and rumbling, heralded the full development of the tragedy. A few seconds later the unfortunate barge, the remnants of its side showing an unexpected and virgin white where the merciless paddles had splintered the timbers, went spinning outwards again, strongly repelled, weeping whole tons of coal into the unresponsive waters. It seemed as though the blow had inclined it with a sudden and active sense of revenge. Whirling back upon the fickle tug that had betrayed it, the mutilated barge bore the little vessel headlong against another of its kind. There was a grinding together of small bridges this time, a snapping of a stanchion, a tearing of canvas, and the fall of a couple of lifebelts that had been attached. As a conclusion, all three craft in company bumped against the massive iron side of one of the ocean steamers, and rocked helplessly for a while amidst a chorus from human tongues whose particular language fitted the incident as aptly as is the case under such circumstances elsewhere in the world.

The *San Martin*, bearing a mound of coal just forward of her port paddle-box as a trophy, proceeded on her way. Past steamers, flying the flags of a dozen nationalities, past grey-tinted river gunboats, sailing yachts moored in front of their club-house, and through rows of the country-built schooners that bear

to market their loads of timber and fruit—the *San Martin* thudded serenely on, swung to the left, passed between the official port buildings pleasantly set amidst verdure and trees, and so made for the open channel of the La Plata river.

To the front twin rows of great buoys, varying in design from the solid dome to the intricate and scaffold-like structures that towered high above the rest, marked the channel in the mysterious and impressive fashion of these quaint, bobbing shapes. The brown waters lent a certain mystery, too, to the numerous hulls that floated upon them. Far out in the stream was an anchored cluster of steamers awaiting their turn to enter the docks we had left. Plain cargo vessels and 'tramps' they were, since the great liners know nothing of the waters of this channel, but steam in at the northern entrance in all the bright glory of their lofty, brilliant sides, surmounted by the tremendous paraphernalia of a modern floating town.

An Italian emigrant vessel, however, came ploughing along the brown channel, making for the great spread of roofs that now obscured the outline of the docks themselves. Rusty and worn, she bore a load of newcomers who lined the side to wave their greetings with the enthusiasm of the homeward, rather than the outward, bound. Perhaps they knew that, where the sharp spires and pinnacles now alone broke the horizon, a quarter of a million of their countrymen awaited them—more than

sufficient to break the rough edges of a landing on strange soil!

Through clusters of merchantmen, dredgers, and minor craft, the *San Martin* ploughed her way, flinging up a trail of foam that was white only by comparison with the chocolate hue of the stream. Buenos Aires had sunk until nothing beyond a tiny serration of the flat horizon stood out to mark its place. The lines of buoys, too, had fallen astern: the vessel was steaming on a vast muddy sea that, but for the faint cliffs of Uruguay in the far distance, might have been limitless.

After all, what is there to tell of the first part of the journey? A devious course across the broad flood, regulated by the occasional buoys; the rapid approach of the banks on either hand that marks the entrance to the narrower stream of the Paraná; the fringe of willows and rushes that indicate the complicated maze of the islands and the mainland itself; the minor ports whose neighbourhood is defined from afar by the small forest of masts that prick well above the flat surface of the country—the first part of the voyage is but a repetition of these scenes placed in any order of sequence that you will.

With so little variety of spectacle without, it is time, in the way of all good and observant travellers, to turn the attention to the details of the river boat itself, and to sink the past in the present tense, since the voyage is fairly under way. Although

lacking in other English travellers, the saloon passenger list comprises a fairly representative gathering. There are a couple of Argentine officials attached to the agricultural department, well set up, accurately tailored, and with carefully trained moustaches, who are returning to their posts in Corrientes after a period of leave spent in the capital. In their company is an infantry officer in his smart uniform of the German pattern. He, too, has been enjoying the relaxations of Buenos Aires, and reflects with satisfaction now that he has made the most of his time—not without reason, since such periods of gaiety are few and far between for him. The captain's destination lies in the far Chaco, altogether without the pale of civilisation. Here he and his company are stationed to watch the Indians—the genuine aborigines that the remoter forests still know, dusky folk well versed in the ethics of the bow and arrow, and rarer musket, who from time to time sally out from the leafy shadows and leave a blood trail where they have raided. The captain has other friends on board in addition to the officials. He is hailed as an old acquaintance by a couple of estancieros whose properties lie upon the line of march to the military post. Yet these, though themselves 'at the back of beyond,' are a good three days' ride on the civilised side of the remote garrison.

A French consul on the way to take up his post at Asuncion is pacing the deck conversing with an

A CORRIENTES COUNTRY CHURCH

engineer compatriot who is explaining the progress of the Rosario harbour works at great length and with many gestures. An Italian grain merchant is hobnobbing with a Spanish commercial traveller. The latter, for his part, a loud-mouthed being whose manners compare unfavourably with those of his Argentine fellow-bagmen, takes every opportunity of imitating the actions of a fine-looking military priest from whose black cassock gleams a splash of purple.

But it is impossible fully to enumerate this strangely cosmopolitan set of travellers. Paraguayan deputies, a company of Germans bound for the timber district of the Chaco, Brazilian landowners, Bolivian officials—these constitute only a tithe of those who go to form the company of the males. If I have left the ladies to the last, it is only because, hindered doubtless by the mysteries of the toilette, they are the last to appear upon deck. There are provincial ladies in costumes the basis of which is Parisian, although the cut savours not a little of the *campo*. Perhaps it is the realisation of this that causes them to gaze a little wistfully at others of the real *haute volée* whose creations are quite undoubted in quality and design. Amongst these latter are the wife and daughter of the governor of the most important province to the east of the Paraná river, widely travelled ladies who insist on talking very excellent English, and who rejoice at the opportunity of taking a hand at the ubiquitous 'bridge.'

Even now, at the conclusion of the lengthy list, the varieties of this travelling company are not exhausted. Mount the ladder that leads to the unsheltered topmost deck that is dedicated to the third class, and you will find yourself in the midst of a gathering very different to the first. Groups of men are sitting and lying in the full sunshine —men for the most part in clothes of rough, thick texture, adorned with caps and hats of a wide range of pattern, from which, however, the sombrero of the country is almost entirely excluded. The motley band counts English, Russians, Germans, Austrians, and a select company of West Indian negroes. These latter ebony adventurers chatter and sing in their own peculiar rendering of English, and actually burst at intervals into the antics and step-dances with which the stage variety of the race is invariably credited.

These occupants of the topmost deck are new-comers, almost to a man, swept up from the Buenos Aires docks and elsewhere to feed the labour appetite of the contractors for a railway to the far north; in Brazil, in fact—a company whose life-histories compare vividly with those of the select gathering beneath! Reckless as to their past, knowing nothing of what lies before them, and caring just about as much, they are crude philosophers—in all matters that do not appertain to tobacco and cigarettes. For these commodities they clamour loudly into the ears of the foremen in charge, and not in vain.

In the meanwhile the *San Martin* has been progressing steadily upstream. A long-distance craft, she is set to ignore all ports to the south of Rosario. With the fall of darkness she is still plodding steadily ahead, threading her way between the islands. As for the surroundings, they are almost as distinct by night as in the light of day. The strong moonlight is assisted by the glare of burning reeds and grass upon the banks. At a dozen points the blaze of a conflagration rises. Plain to view in those near at hand are the tall tongues of fire that leap fiercely upwards from a space of many acres. The remoter burnings, mere lines of light, exactly resemble the illuminations of great towns. To one who sees the sight for the first time the lonely plains might well be as populous already as will surely be their fate in the future. Upon the horizon are half a dozen of these seeming cities, whose faint glow mottles the sky in placid contrast to the brilliant fiery screens that rise up from the blazing areas near by.

Thus through the night. With the advent of morning the province of Buenos Aires has fallen away to the left. That of Santa Fé has taken its place, producing nothing, however, in the way of variation of landscape to mark the change until the town of Rosario itself is approached. Then the flat bank rises up into low cliffs that do their utmost to conceal from the navigator the great town of wheat just behind them. The *San Martin*,

manœuvring her paddles accurately, drives alongside the wharf. In a moment the cessation of the dull throbbing marks the first halt in the long river voyage.

Rosario is described elsewhere in this book—a convenient fact that obviates the necessity of landing for the occasion. So far as this particular trip is concerned, too, it is the lower and more prosaic reaches that offer the least attraction. Therefore it is as well to stay on board, waiting with all the patience at one's command for the vessel to proceed. There is far to go yet ere the river banks blossom out into the series of landscape that the northern stretches have to offer. Steamers, low cliffs, and grain-shoots! They are excellent in their place—which is here—but from the point of view of the picturesque they altogether fail to vindicate the charm of the great stream.

Yet even here there is a little special picture of life—completely insignificant and utterly ludicrous. Roped to the riverward side of the *San Martin* are a couple of barges. Upon the deck of either of these are stray patches of sugar, rendered sticky by the heat, that have exuded from some bags brought down from the north. The most ardent of Argentina's admirers cannot deny the importance of its fly population—he could not in any case were he to gaze upon the decks of these barges. There may have been a million, or there may have been merely a few hundred thousand of the insects that

THE TRANSPORT OF QUEBRACHO LOGS

covered the melting lakes of sugar. On the deck of each barge were two or three hens and a number of half-grown chickens. The business of one and all was precisely the same. Their heads were striking downwards as automatically and as rapidly as wags the cranium of a China mandarin. And at each peck of a beak there was one fly the less upon the decks of the barges. During the tremendous repast that they offered the hapless insects remained as motionless as currants in a pudding, and met with a similar fate.

The reason of this obliging and altogether unflylike behaviour I have yet to learn. At the passage of a human being the insects flew a little to one side, and the chickens followed them grudgingly, pecking with ceaseless regularity as they went. Viewed either as a meal or as a massacre of flies, the proportions of the feat were unique. And when the *San Martin* drew away from the spot each fowl was still stolidly feeding at the rate of one fly a second.

Rosario has fallen behind now to the tune of the beating paddle-wheels. To the left the sandstone cliffs continue still: on the other hand the flat sandy stretches and jutting spits are increasing in number and in size. Here, as elsewhere, the white sails of the trading topsail schooners fleck the stream thickly. The mirage effects are more obvious in these than in anything else. Here is an object that is approaching even now in the far

distance—a dark hull towering high up in the air with a little glimmering spread of white above it. It is not until its nearer approach that the appearance of this amazing vessel becomes normal. Then all at once the hull sinks down to within a few feet of the water's edge, while the canvas above unfolds and spreads to its proper proportions in the manner of a magic fan. It is just an ordinary vessel with gaily shirted men for its crew, and with timber and fruit for its cargo. Caught up by the irresponsible mirage, it has served it for the playing of one more of its countless tricks.

A little further on, one of these same schooners is at hand to point out a more solid lesson. High and dry upon one of the sandbanks to the right that have now completely replaced the rushes at the water's edge, the luckless craft lies some couple of hundred of feet from the stream, and half a dozen yards above its level. Forced to the spot during the last period of the river's flooding, and there left stranded, nothing remains but to await the season when the turbulent waters shall come down in full volume again, and leap over the white sand to envelop the outcast schooner and claim it once more. Beside the craft is pitched a tent, at the entrance of which stands a man, waving a greeting to the passing steamer. Craft, tent, and human being, all look arid enough. Just now the river is unusually low, but that the time of flood will come is more certain than the majority of affairs upon this earth.

CHAPTER XXIII

TO THE NORTH BY STREAM—(*continued*)

English Missionaries—Some Peculiarities of the Paranâ—A River of Moods—Diamante—The City of Paranâ—Riparian Scenes—Delusions of the Stream—The Task of the *Conquistadores*—Santa Elena—Some Evidences of the North—Native Anglers—La Paz—The Kingfisher and his Methods—A Storm on the River—Some Effects of Wind and Waves.

THE call at Rosario has been productive of a surprise. In the course of the continuous human barter and interchange of passengers that forms part of the existence of such a vessel as the *San Martin*, some travellers of a new order have come to take their places amidst the rest. A couple of clergymen in Anglican garb afford a rare enough sight in a land where even Roman Catholic priests are few and far between. And these, moreover, are bent upon a purpose more unusual yet. Accompanied by a lady worker, they are returning to a mission in the remote Chaco of Paraguay. Their destination, in consequence, is further afield even than that of the Argentine officer. The mission, moreover, is doing good work among tribes to whom previously the white man was to all intents and purposes unknown. It is but natural, therefore, that the sight of these

missionaries—who rejoice in the somewhat rare temperament that undoubtedly qualifies them to *be* missionaries—arouses not a little of that easy and complacent pride that wells up from the deeds of others, especially if they be countrymen.

As for the *San Martin,* she is already drawing near to Diamante, an important town upon the Entre Rios bank. The landscape has already begun to display some hint of that subtle series of transformations that marks the voyage from south to north. The ceibo trees have grown in girth; the brilliant red of their blossoms seems to have resolved itself into a yet more vivid scarlet. The general variety of plants along the bank, too, has insensibly become greater. The river itself, in one of its most variable moods, has abruptly reversed its surroundings. To the left the ground has sunk almost to the level of the water; it is on the right that the cliffs have risen now, far bolder and more pronounced than those below.

It is a little curious, to digress for a short while, that, to the best of my knowledge, the main Paraná is bounded at no spot in its course by lofty banks on either hand. The beginning of the cliffs upon the one side is answered by the disappearance of those upon the other. Yet they exist as a rule even upon the flat side of the stream—dry, abrupt banks, frequently many miles from the water, that raise themselves, apparently without rhyme or reason, from the level spread of country beneath.

The explanation lies in the temperament of the mighty Paraná. Persuasion it will submit to, but coercion and confinement, never! Though it may consent to be guided by a wall upon one side, it sees to it that it retains the other free and at its service in case of riotous need. Dealing thus as it does with the very forces of nature, with how much greater contempt has it not treated the puny disciplinary efforts of man! Many an engineer has found out by now to his cost that it is to diplomacy alone that the great river will bow—if it be in the mood to heed anything at all.

The *San Martin* has drawn up against the quay at Diamante. The town stands upon a bold bluff, its roofs dominated by a quaintly shaped building, set on a hill loftier than the rest, the rectangular architecture of which exactly resembles the structure of the playing-card house beloved of children.

The next stopping place is Paraná, one of the most important halts in the course of the journey. The capital of Entre Rios is prettily situated, and the parks and gardens by the river banks leave nothing to be desired. But just now we do not intend to land even at this centre of government, learning, and commerce. The town, too large for a casual visit, is dealt with elsewhere. It is necessary to stick to the ship, and to answer to the call of the north!

The buildings of Paraná have fallen away in the distance, and the small forests of masts upon the opposite bank that denote Colastiné, the sea-going

port of Santa Fé, have dwindled away as well. On the left bank of the river—and thus on the right-hand side of the vessel—the cliffs continue in unbroken sequence. The high level mark of the last period of flooding is obvious in a continuous line, some thirty feet above the present level of the water, that runs along the face of the limestone wall. Seen from a distance, it might have been accurately ruled by a pencil, a fine line that traces its course for mile after mile. In reality it is a great hollow above which the yet untouched soil projects outwards, frequently to the danger of collapse.

There are sailing craft in plenty upon the river, but the cliffs shut out the signs of life upon land. At the back of the high ground stretches actually pastoral and agricultural land. There is evidence of this at a spot where the bank has dipped to within a few feet of the water's edge. Here rises the dust cloud that floats above a compact company of hustling and pounding cattle. At the back of them, and rigorously guarding the flanks, ride the gauchos. Amidst the galloping of horses and the swinging of lassos the cattle are being driven one by one over a crude, wooden pier into a barge that is moored for their reception, while a steam tug floats near by in readiness for the tow.

As for the river, its behaviour has become puzzling to a degree. Indeed, in a dozen spots it would be the simplest thing possible to persuade the newcomer that the waters no longer form a river at

all, but a lake. Ahead of where the steamer is furrowing its course the broad and softly glittering expanse is to all appearances completely hemmed in. A bank of trees and verdure—a cloud-like bar that seems to hover in a very magical and dreamlike fashion between sky and stream—stretches across to leave no perceptible gap whatever. It is only a very near approach that reveals the key to the puzzle. The stream itself has swung at a right angle to left or right, and the passage thus suddenly revealed is as likely as not itself threatened by one of these delicate green barriers that in turn, like many of the terrors of a magic land, fades away when approached.

The Paraná, for all its mighty stream, is a river of delusions. Ascending it thus, the question must inevitably rise in the mind of one who knows anything of the history of the land: how did the *conquistadores*, upon their first real inland voyage, succeed in ascending as they did from the deserted fort of Buenos Aires to Asuncion? How often did the small yet cumbrous caravels stick fast upon the shifting shallows of the river, and how frequently did they return from branching out into streams to right and left to seek once more the main current that led—they knew not whither? The very calm and bald historian is apt to state briefly that 'they ascended the river.' It would be almost as ingenuous to imply that a French army corps had passed into Switzerland by way of the summit of Mont Blanc.

As for Hannibal, his well-advertised passage of the Alps, although perhaps more arduous, was incomparably less difficult than this of the great network of rivers. He and many others—including Bleriot and the Flying Dutchman—possessed at least a definite mental vision of their journey's end. The *conquistadores* passed cheerfully a thousand miles and more by floodings, shallows, and a thousand deceitful watery arms, knowing nothing, and fearing less. Having no destination, they made one when they arrived!

As the *San Martin* steams upstream towards Santa Elena the cliffs upon the bank become more varied and brilliant in colour. From out of the neutral tints of grey-brown grow streaks and patches of vivid red and brilliant yellow, while in many spots the surface is of pure white. The metamorphosis is only in sympathy with the changing aspect of all else. Upon the northward way the increase of colour is proportionate to the decrease in degrees of latitude. Costumes that were picturesque in Buenos Aires province have become commonplace by comparison. As the complexions have grown darker the garments have taken on butterfly tints. The blossoms have increased in number and variety, and the waters of the stream itself give out an added sparkle to the clear atmosphere whose temperature is steadily waxing.

At Santa Elena, a fairly important spot that possesses a large *saladero* (meat-curing factory), is

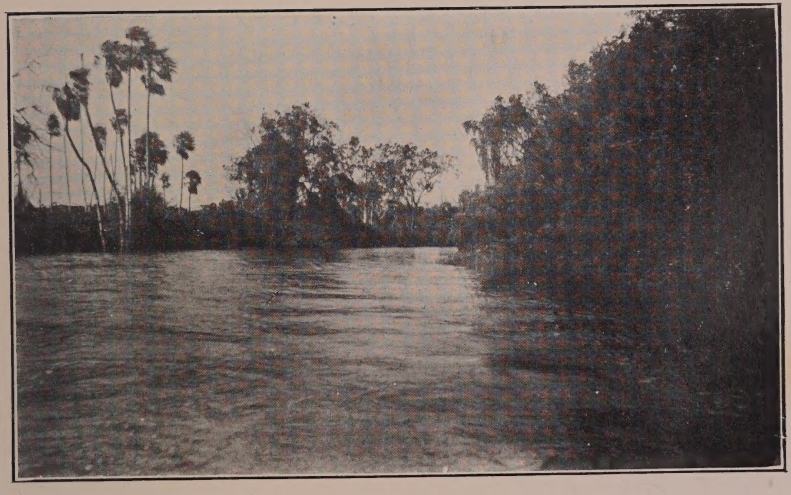
the first evidence of local colour that denotes a nearer approach to the tropics. Flanking the tree-girt buildings and chimneys of the *saladero* is a native village. Upon a rising swell of ground are streets and clusters of huts, contrived of reeds, of quaint and picturesque design. The settlement, unshaded by trees, is bare to the sunrays, lit up in addition, moreover, by the brilliant costumes of the women. Along the shore is a litter of rude native craft, and upon the sandy beach at the foot of the cliffs to the north is a line of Indian fishermen. The method of fishing is simplicity itself: into it enter no flies, reels, or any other superfluous gear! A large stone, attached to a line near the baited hook, is whirled in circles above the head in the fashion of a lasso, and is flung as far as possible out into the waters; after which the dusky fisherman does the only thing that is left for him: he sits down and waits—not usually for very long, for bites are numerous enough. It is a pleasant spot in which to recline according to his ideals, since the sand is very white, very soft, and very deep. By the side of each angler is a small collection of fish, creatures whose scales altogether fail to give out the wonted glitter. A freshly caught one is being pulled ashore even now. Disengaged from the hook, it is flung to one side. Flapping wildly in its bed of sand, in a minute or two it becomes as dull and powdered as its unfortunate predecessors. Near by, some boys are rolling and diving into the masses of the soft white substance. The strip of

country at the base of the cliff seems entirely devoted to Indians, fish, and sand.

Onwards once more to La Paz. A picturesque town this, situated on a cliff that dips conveniently just here to give access to the small wharf below. The tide is running with unusual fierceness at the spot, and the handling of the *San Martin* is worth the watching. Steaming well above the place itself, she drops her anchor, and, paying out the hawser, she sweeps back in a curve, controlled by the anchor as well as by the paddles, until she brings up to a nicety alongside the wharf. On shore are great ox-wagons straining through the deep sand up the hill, laden to the brim with wood. Others are filled with charcoal, since this is one of the most important centres of the commodity; but here, in order to increase the load, the sides of the wagon have been heightened by an artificial hedge of sticks with a distinctly quaint effect as the result.

At La Paz a few brilliant kingfishers have taken the place of the Indian anglers. None who have watched the antics of the birds can deny their resource and dashing methods. Never did a creature dive with less fuss and fewer preliminaries than one of these. His attitude, as he sits on a branch that overhangs the river or on the bowsprit stay of one of the small sailing vessels, is apt to render a quite false index to his character. Looking downwards in plaintive expectancy, his air suggests

A CHACO LAGOON



A REACH OF THE PILCOMAYO

a melancholy rumination that might well be concerned with the feathers of an unkind little queen-fisher. That is his pose for one second. The next, he has shot downwards like a bullet. A well-accentuated plop and a splash in the water coincides with his complete disappearance for a moment or two. Then he has emerged, to ascend to his perch again almost as rapidly as he fell. Whether he has a tiny fish in his beak or whether he has failed, the marvel is that his fragile frame can withstand the concussion that ensues as he drives it headlong into the water.

Throughout the journey the temperature has been steadily rising as the boat's nose eats its way into the north. Nevertheless the breeze has remained pleasantly cool and refreshing, and the shaded main decks offer a delightful climate. The unsheltered upper space alone is at the mercy of the sun. The adventurous errant labour knights here are already feeling the effects of the intenser rays. The sole remedy possible to them is the shedding of a number of the thick and unsuitable garments, and this method of moulting in search of relief is continued conscientiously day by day.

Judging from the conversation of the men, they had given no thought whatever to any possible vicissitudes of climate. Of the entire company the West Indian negroes alone have warmed with the weather into a gayer mood. Their antics have become more lively yet, and at the ports they have

taken to hailing any chance groups of *peones* in cheery salutations rendered in their own peculiar English that, although incomprehensible to the natives, obviously amuses both parties.

With the fall of night, however, comes a marked change in the atmosphere. The breeze, created now by the passage of the vessel alone, has become charged with new and rather stifling elements. From the south, a black mass of cloud that vomits long tongues of flame has already wiped out the moon, and is chasing the vessel on her course. From half a dozen different centres at once the approaching forked fire lights up the low banks—since all vestige of cliff has now fallen on either hand—until the outline of the trees becomes continuously painted in black against the wildly dancing horizon. Then, as the crashes of thunder mingle in one tremendous roll, a strong air springs up. It might have been wafted straight from a newly opened furnace door! Indeed, so abrupt is its advent and so intense its effect that every human being gasps involuntarily as it strikes. For a minute or two it continues, and—after it the deluge! Then once more peace, and, above, the moon that tries in vain to quench the brilliant spangle of the stars.

With the first light of the morning comes another change. The elements are out of joint just now, and are warring once more with the Titanic ardour that characterises the tempests of the region. This

exhibition of nature dwarfs even the performance of the previous night. The lightning flashes, and peals of thunder, blinding and deafening, form only a part of the tremendous doings. The wind is howling and shrieking about the fabric of the steamer. The rain, moreover, is coming down with a vehemence that hides all things save the waters in the immediate neighbourhood of the craft. Although the river is comparatively narrow here, no more than half a mile in width in fact, the banks on either hand are completely shut out by the cataracts of the falling waters.

The *San Martin,* feeling her way cautiously at half-speed, ploughs slowly along, quivering from stem to stern beneath the force of the wind, and the tumultuous attack of the short, steep waves. Quite suddenly, evoked by a pause in the downpour, the banks start out into view from the mist, and the whole raging panorama is revealed. The brown of the river has been churned almost altogether into white. Urged by the howling wind, the waves go sweeping across in a ferment to dash themselves against the perpendicular bank. At the point of contact sheets of spray and solid water are struck up high into the air, driving on to smother the vegetation with their stinging masses, while the lower volume pulls down into the water such fallen tree-trunks and *débris* as it can obtain.

But this is the mere light skirmishing, the show and spume of the combat. The real attack is upon the

perpendicular banks themselves. The brown and white waters are beating mercilessly upon the brown soil, hollowing it with an almost incredible rapidity. The result is dramatic all along the line. At intervals rises a great splash that marks the fall of chocolate earth. Simultaneously a section of the tree-tops dip with a quiver and tremble, then slide with a run into the waters. Lower and lower they bend as the submerged earth is torn from their roots. In a moment or two they have fallen for ever, and are twisting and turning helplessly in the eddies of the stream. Thus along the whole length of the bank are great trunks, and a forest of tossing green branches sticking upwards at a pathetic angle as they whirl with the current.

It is all over in a couple of hours. The aftermath of the stream is perceptible in three elements. The air has cooled almost to the point of chilliness; the hollows on the shore hold small lakes, and upon the river the slaughtered trees still come sailing down. It is a revelation of another of the Paraná's moods, and of what its waters can effect even in the upper reaches.

CHAPTER XXIV

TO THE NORTH BY STREAM (*continued*)

Minor Ports—Their Commerce and Officialdom—The Corrientino—The Forest and its Aisles—Sylvan Stock-riding—Cliffs and their Architecture—An Indian Move—Household Goods upon the Waters—Bella Vista—Its Orange Industry—Growing Exuberance of the Verdure—Scenes on the Shore—Bird Life—At Close Quarters with the Bank.

THE higher the river is ascended, the more frequent become the ports of call. As may be imagined, the reason for this is not an increased density of population. It is merely that places too insignificant in size to be deemed worthy of a visit nearer the mouth assume here a certain importance that causes the steamer to halt at each. At the majority of the humbler spots the shipping incidents are slender. A piece of machinery will perhaps be slung into the waiting barge, accompanied by a very attenuated mail-bag, and by a couple of passengers who have concluded their voyage at the spot. In exchange there is very little received, it must be admitted. Were the *San Martin* southward bound the case would be different, since many of the small wharves are thickly littered with baskets of oranges, tomatoes, and numerous other

fruits that are awaiting shipment by a downstream boat.

The most insignificant of these places of call is amply provided with port officials. The clanking of the anchor chain and the whistle of the steamer are coincident with the darting out from the bank of a government boat, flying the Argentine flag, manned by three or four officials in white costume, that struggles, crab-fashion, to the steamer across the rapid stream. Occasionally these official craft display many-sided virtues, and serve as tenders for passengers and luggage in those spots where a single roof or so, half lost amidst the trees, affords the sole evidence of human occupation. With the banks of the province of Corrientes upon the right-hand side now, the costumes of the *peones* have become yet more striking. A more than usually voluminous apron of bright hue covers the front of the *bombachos*—the broad Turkish trousers —and gives a skirt-like appearance to the lower half of the men's costumes. The complexion of these children of the soil is steadily growing darker, and every now and then the cigarette in the mouth is replaced by a cigar—a sight that is practically unknown further south.

The banks themselves have assumed wonderfully fascinating aspects. Here is a stretch of forest whose borders press down to the water's edge, until the falling away of the trees reveals a broad stretch of lush green in which the cattle and horses feed,

enveloped to above their knees in the tall grasses. Forest closes in the pastoral scene once again—forest that is frequently intersected by curious marsh channels. These, the beds of streams at periods when the river's level is higher, resemble in outline an English lane. But here every component part is of a vivid green—green track and dense walls of verdure, the whole is blended together as solidly as an aisle, fleckless but for the blossoms that star the tint. The effect of these soft, clear-cut ways is quite entrancing. They are places where fairies might dance, and make their thrones in the nooks of the leafage—in actual fact, the nearest approach to these airy beings is probably the monkey, since the outskirts of the simian realm have already been approached.

At one point the sylvan surroundings fall back a little to reveal a sudden glimpse of activity. Within the stockade of a rough *corral* are half a dozen *peones* and a score of cattle. All are in violent motion. The cattle are floundering wildly in their obstinate refusal to pass along a narrow plank that leads to a barge by the river bank, and the horsemen are dashing to and fro in vain. As the *San Martin* comes abreast of the spot a lasso falls about the horns of one of the cattle. A couple of dismounted men are hauling at the animal by means of this : a second couple, still in the saddle, are urging their horses' chests against the bullock's hindquarters. For a while the contest continues in strenuous uncertainty.

But the strain in the end proves too much for the bullock. With head still lowered in defiant resistance he has begun to move forward against his will. The *peones*, knowing that when the first passes the rest will follow, redouble their efforts. So does the bullock his, with the shoreward end of the dreaded plank at his very feet. The two riders rein hurriedly back, and bring their horses to a charge against his reluctant stern. At the very moment of impact the course of the steamer brings out a projecting spur of forest to intervene—and the remainder of the scene is lost.

Approaching Bella Vista, an important town on the Corrientes shore, the cliffs have appeared again by the water's edge to the right. Bizarre and curious in structure, they are quite different to anything of the kind that has preceded them. Their surface is wrought into pinnacles by the action of the water, the collections of sharp peaks resembling inverted stalactites. The variety of the quaint patterns is as amazing as the area that they cover. Indeed, there are many places where this design of nature is so intricate that the surface of the cliff has all the appearance of elaborate fretwork. A dry and deep river-course that has tunnelled its way clean through the rock presents a really extraordinary appearance. With the sheer, lofty walls on either hand chased from top to bottom with their delicate tiers of spires—the tracery is wealthier and more admirable here than elsewhere—it is a

matter for surprise how, with such lofty and tremendous sides, the bed of the intermittent stream can ever be quite dry, as it now is.

The rounding of a bend reveals a domestic scene and some evidence of human nature upon the waters. A small boat, paddled by an Indian, is coming downstream. The little vessel is laden with the man's family, a woman and three or four children whose dusky complexions are accentuated by the scarlet, blue, and yellow shawls they wear. In the wake of the boat floats a frail raft attached by a light rope. Upon this latter are piled the household goods of the family—a crude chair and three or four mysterious-looking bundles of neutral tint. In any case, the luggage, such as it is, represents much to its owners, and, as a matter of precaution, it has been placed under the guardianship of a shaggy-coated dog.

It may be taken for granted that the creature has assumed this charge with no little reluctance, since he has seated himself upon the very edge of the logs nearest the boat, whose occupants he is regarding with plaintive unease. Indeed, deriving small comfort from the company of the bundles and the chair, he is continually measuring with his eye the watery space that separates him from the congenial human society in the boat. On each occasion, however, he thinks better of it: perhaps a previous attempt has left an unpleasant memory of disciplinary castigation in his mind.

The approach of the steamer is viewed with no

little anxiety by this lesser expedition. The Indian paddles strenuously to bring round the bow of his boat, so as to meet squarely the lines of combing wash that go furrowing outwards from the paddles. In another moment the little craft, family and all, is pitching wildly, flinging first its nose, then its stern, high up in the air. Immediately afterwards the raft follows suit, dancing with far clumsier movements that send a light wash of water over the logs to wet the precious household goods, and the feet of the dog as well, as he bends and strains to retain the balance of his body. With protest written large upon his attitude, the face of the canine guardian wears an even more woeful expression than before. All this for nothing more than the exchange of one reed hut for another! But in a minute or two more the details of this household removal have become faint and small, receding far down upon the stream.

In the neighbourhood of Bella Vista itself the nature of the cliffs has altered once again. With the surface now comparatively smooth and unworked by nature, the tops have become serrated in the boldest fashion. Indeed, the sandstone has succeeded in flinging up a series of jagged points of a kind that might be imagined the legitimate property of a granite range alone. Curiously enough, just here there is a close bristle of peaks of which—were they magnified a few hundred times!—the mighty Andes themselves might feel proud.

A WATERCOURSE THROUGH ALLUVIAL EARTH

A CHACO STREAM

Bella Vista lies in a cleft in the surrounding hills. The narrow dip is filled with verdure and with the roofs of the town. There is sand in the foreground, deeper, whiter, and of greater area than even that at Santa Elena. To right and left are similar dusky fishermen, with bags and captured finny creatures at their side. The landing arrangements are primitive but fairly effectual. They consist of a long plank that stretches from the steamer's deck to the beach. Protruding from the sand in the neighbourhood are rows of barrels and cases that call to mind the pictures of the wreckers' dens of old. A covered 'camp' coach, with its side blinds lowered as a protection against the sun, has come down to the water's edge to pick up one of the steamer's passengers. As it mounts the steep incline on its return, the four horses that draw it scramble and flounder wildly through the powdery depths, jerking the vehicle upwards little by little until the solid ground above is won.

On either side of the cleft that holds the town the tall cliffs rise up to shut out the country behind. Just now the near line of their summit is broken only by a single object—the upper half of a mule that has strayed to the very edge of the precipice. The two long ears that break the skyline above are ludicrously magnified—almost to the size of angels' wings! In fact, the unusual position of the animal lends to his outline a glamour that renders the sight of this guardian spirit of Bella Vista only the more ridiculous.

A little to the north of the town the land sinks downwards and resolves itself into a country of gentle undulations. Covering many of these are orange plantations of quite unusual extent. Closely planted lines of the dark trees cover hundreds of acres with mathematical precision, since the rows, though mounting and falling over hill and dale, remain exactly parallel. The industry is an important one here, and the produce of the orange fields of Bella Vista weighs down many a southward-bound boat with tons of the golden fruit globes.

After leaving Bella Vista there ensue periodical waitings and fuss at some reed hamlets of so insignificant a size as to rouse the captain's ire at the procedure. The question seems to resolve itself into how much right a few shanties that possess a name and little beyond have to detain an electric-lit steamer that carries officers, pursers, and an army of brass-buttoned stewards—to say nothing of the passengers.

But if the officials are impatient it is not so with many of the rest. The slower gliding of the steamer and the frequent halts reveal many delights of the river banks that must otherwise have been missed. The mauve swamp flowers that stand up in great clumps upon their tall stems, the blossoming shrubs and trees, and the feathery masses of bamboo that wave airily amidst the heavier branches —with all this and the innumerable growths beyond, the verdure has assumed the denseness and mystery

of true forest. Now and again it just permits the revelation of some little haunt of humanity. Here, for instance, is a bamboo-laden schooner whose masts prick upwards through the branches that extend themselves above to shelter the entire vessel. There are dark-skinned men and women seated on the bank by the side of the craft, and they in turn are flanked by the evidence of domesticity, however itinerant. On the flower-bearing bushes are other, and foreign, blossoms—nothing less, indeed, than an outbreak of ' washing ' hung out to dry ! Curiously enough, the procedure here seems to involve but little profanation of nature. So brilliant and varied are the hues of the garments that they rest upon the verdure much in the way of the genuine flowers, and are received into the landscape with no perceptible clash of protest. In not many spots could the ' week's washing ' perform so æsthetic a feat as this !

Here and there the trees have fallen away a pace or two from the water's edge, leaving a natural path that runs between the silent barriers of vegetation and the eddying waters. Along one of these walks a man who trails across his shoulder the long stem, with its rounded bunch of leaves, that distinguishes the tobacco plant. Peering out in places from the aisles of the forest are others of these leafy heads, thriving untended amidst the close confusion of the surrounding growths.

With the approach of evening the bird life of the

stream becomes more pronounced. Enormous flocks of great black ducks rise up, spread out into extended order, and hasten over the water in perfectly ordered lines. Far larger fowl, brown water-birds with ragged wings barred with a lighter hue, follow their course, dipping regularly in switchback fashion to slide for a while upon the surface of the stream, their brilliant red claws cleaving a clean furrow in the water ere they soar upwards once more without losing momentum. Myriads of giant swallows, too, are darting and flitting in all directions, while the gorgeous little kingfishers are diving with the sheer impetuosity that characterises their species.

Upon the branches that jut out from the river itself—sole relics of the once mighty trees that the floods have swept from the shore—sit innumerable cormorants, yellow as to their head and shoulders, with the remainder of the body a deep black. The bi-coloured creatures might themselves be dead fruit of the withered branches, so statuesque is their repose. At intervals, breaking out into a sudden spasm of life, they flap off from their perches to swoop about and to survey the promise of the waters. Then, returning to their chosen seats, they sink back into their strategic immobility.

Night is on the point of falling softly to the accompaniment of the frogs' music, and—as even the most picturesque scenes have necessarily their prosaic side—the passengers, officers, and stewards of the *San Martin* are busily engaged with the even-

ing meal. Suddenly, from the set of broad windows on the port side comes a rustling that increases strangely in volume, until it becomes accentuated by quick volleys of snapping crashes. The company, being only human, hastens outside, when the reason of the curious sounds becomes immediately obvious. The steamer, in order to escape a shoal that stretches almost from one side of the river to the other, has hugged the bank with an undue degree of enthusiasm. Indeed, so close is she now that a single step would suffice to win from the deck to the soft shore. Hence the swishing of the leaves and the snapping of the twigs as they sweep like ten thousand brooms along the decks and the side of the saloon.

This crashing through the branches and sweeping aside of the verdure to reveal the inner sanctuaries of leaf and bloom that it has protected is productive of curious sensations—especially on the part of the birds who flee in terror from the spot. In a minute or two the nose of the steamer points outwards again, and her stern shears a final lump or two of mud from the bank, while the last rustlings die away to silence. It is the second occasion on which the *San Martin* has unwittingly taken cargo aboard. In Buenos Aires it was in the shape of a small black heap of coal. This last consignment fits the romance of the spot. Here, instead of coal, there is a light litter of leafage upon the deck illuminated by the many hues of the fallen blossoms.

CHAPTER XXV

TO THE NORTH BY STREAM (*continued*)

In the Quebracho Country—Piraguacito—A Motley Settlement—The Fight with the Waters—Loading Tannin—Methods of the Porters—The Amusement of Labour—Native Canoes—Corrientes—An Important River Junction—Woman and the Weed—A Baptism of Fire—The Threshold of the Tropics—Forest Dwellings—Las Palmas—A Family Encampment—The Coming of the Crocodile—His Character as Target—Bougainvillea and *Diego de Noche*—A Gigantic Flower—Variety in Passengers—Travelling Sociability—The Unwisdom of the Immigrant.

DURING the later stretches of the journey a few rafts of timber have become noticeable as they float down the stream under human guidance. The stripped trunks, too, are in evidence within the long barges that are lying up in the small ports or that go gliding down the stream in the wake of tugs. The wood of these, distinctly red in shade, is of an amazing hardness and weight. Indeed, to its consistency it owes its name, since this, quebracho, signifies 'axe-breaker.' So ponderous is its substance, moreover, that, refusing to float on the surface of water, its cruder transit is effected by a means of ingenious coaxing. The quebracho wood that goes sailing down the river is supported from

beneath by other layers of ordinary timber. Thus, owing to their comparatively intricate formation, the size of these rafts upon the Paraná is not to be compared with that of the Canadian specimens of the craft, nor with that of those that go in stately procession down the Central European rivers.

For some while the *San Martin* has been steaming through the quebracho country, and she is even now approaching one of the chief ports of the industry, Piraguacito, in the territory of the Chaco that faces Corrientes across the river. Not, it must be admitted, that Piraguacito has much to offer in outward appearance by way of vindication of its importance. The salient features of the spot consist of a large corrugated iron *galpon*, two small houses, whose wide roofs overlap the walls to a considerable distance, and near by a collection of tents and reed *ranchos* disposed in picturesque disorder in the shade of the bamboo trees. Inhabiting these are numerous families of all shades of colour—from the dusky tint of the Indian to the fair hair and blue eyes of the Northern European. Whether dark or fair, however, the taste of all concerning bold colouring in the matter of clothes seems to have become identical.

The produce of the country is evident in the piles of quebracho wood that rise up here and there in the cleared space, flanked in places by far smaller heaps of cattle horns. At intervals between the sprouting verdure a light railway line is just

visible, while the river bank itself is littered with crude canoes, the majority of the 'dug-out' order. In the background of the clearing agriculture is evident in a patch of maize that spreads itself in between the taller growths of the bamboo.

The chief activities of Piraguacito, however, are finding vent at the water's edge. In one spot the fight against the inroads of the stream is in strenuous progress. A steam-hammer is driving one of a series of piles into the mud beneath the bank. These hold together a barrier of stout planks, and the interstice between the wooden wall and the bank itself is being filled up with tree-trunks and logs plastered together with mud. The spot has only recently been raided by the waters; hence the protesting answer on the part of man. But how the Paraná, when once again swollen in wrath, will deal with this attempt at coercion none can say. The probability is that at the first touch of restraint it will seize the entire construction, whirl it away as lightly as feathers are borne upon the wind, and will bite off just as much of the unprotected earth as its appetite dictates. In the meanwhile the steam-hammer is thudding with as much importance as though it would always remain master of the situation as fully as now.

Within a few yards of these defensive operations is a scene of greater hustle and movement that ebbs and flows between a couple of railway trucks and a barge that is moored in waiting. The tannin,

that has been extracted from the quebracho wood, is in the act of being shipped. It is famous tannin this, so plentifully supplied by the red timber that the wood can now be spared for few other purposes. In flat, square, gunny-covered packages it is transferred from truck to barge on the shoulders of a band of dusky *peones* that counts amongst its numbers not a few genuine Indians.

They are a cheery band, fully determined to banish from their task the faintest suspicion of drudgery or monotonous procedure. As one means towards this end they break into volleys of shrill yells in a high tenor that somewhat resembles a red-Indian war-whoop. These are varied by snatches of song, as understood in Piraguacito, and by sufficiently broad jests, as understood throughout the world!

But the methods, not only of its accompaniments but of the work itself, are diversified. It must be admitted that some ingenuity is required in ringing the changes as regards so simple a matter as the carriage of heavy packages from one point to another. Yet they effect it. Half a dozen of the *peones*, the one behind the other, will proceed at a slow, solemn walk until they have reached the beginning of the plank that leads to the barge; then they will burst simultaneously into riotous life, and will dash headlong over the gangway to shoot their load into the bowels of the craft. Others will exactly reverse the procedure—but it is

impossible to attempt to enumerate the number of these gratuitous and spontaneous exercises. The theory of the procedure seems to be that by the addition of some extra, and entirely irresponsible, labour, the inevitable groundwork of the task itself is forgotten, and the whole affair promoted to the status of an afternoon's amusement!

Judging by the pace by which the railway trucks are being emptied, the homœopathic doctrine seems to work well. The 'tally' calls of the foreman, as he signals each descending passage, are incessant and sonorous. Indeed, he chants the number of each bag in a voice that exactly recalls the intoning proper to church services.

The first railway truck is empty now. The perspiring *peones*, lively as ever, have sped down to the water's edge, bearing tin cups. Dipping them into the thick and muddy water of the river, they drink their fill ere hastening back afresh to their task. Just here at the little port there is less reason than usual to commend the bibulous properties of the stream. But it is all one to the *peon*. It suffices for that child of nature that the fluid is wet!

The small group of overseers is pith-hatted to a man—for such headgear is essential in this country of the bamboo and of the incipient orchid. They are German for the most part, since the new and very flourishing quebracho industry is already to a large extent in German hands.

At length the *San Martin* hauls away from Piraguacito, scattering a bevy of native 'dug-out' canoes—quaint craft propelled by paddles with exaggerated shafts not less than six or eight feet in length. The steamer is making for Corrientes upon the other bank now. This, the capital town of the Province of Corrientes, lies near to the northern limits of the Republic itself. But, as though the soil were making a final effort ere passing under another flag, the town is infinitely the most important of all that have been encountered since Paraná was left behind. Here, there is a broad wharf, thronged with folk more or less in the garb of the south; there are carriages, too, and porters, and, as a background, lengthy broad streets, and public gardens.

A small stern-wheel steamer comes fussing along, her single paddle ploughing the water like a marine mowing-machine. Her build signifies that she will branch off to the east, where the shallow and broken waters forbid any but the smallest draught. For just above here is one of the main junctions in this great river system, and thus, ascending, the choice of two forks lies to the front. From the east flows the Alto Paraná with its broken currents that have flowed past the great falls of Iguazú, thundering almost within sight of the main stream. From the north comes the Paraguay, rolling more evenly upon its level bed.

The *San Martin* heads due north. For a number

of miles yet the territory of both the banks is Argentine. As for the local colour, it has become more and more accentuated. At the tiny ports it is not only the brilliant garments that distinguish the peasant woman of the country now. She has adopted a new characteristic, a large cigar that she smokes with enjoyment, holding the weed exactly in the centre of her mouth. As one or two of these women come on board the very babies that they carry are in the act of receiving their baptism of fire. Since both hands are required to hold the infant, the precious cigar necessarily remains in the mouth, and, equally inevitably, in very close proximity to the youngster's face. Thus the head of the tender burden advances, shining through a nimbus—a halo of tobacco smoke—and illuminated by the steady glow of the cigar. But the children, rocked in the fumes of the nicotine, seem entirely contented. Indeed, the absence of a single cough or any similar explosion points to the fact that such vaporous processions are of normal occurrence.

Fringing the shore now are large stretches of green rushes from which the long white necks of the herons protrude—in some places as thickly as crocuses from English turf. As the birds rise and circle about the trees it becomes evident that some are white and grey, while others, more handsome, are deeply barred with black. To the back of the rushes, on the bank itself, the verdure has become

increasingly flecked with red, as the scarlet of the poinsettia trees comes to take its place and to assert itself more markedly amidst the rest. The graceful palm leaves, too, with their fanlike sprays, have now become a regular feature of the spots where the forest is densest.

Orchids on the tree-tops, parrots in the air! The colouring of every attribute of the scene is undergoing another, and yet more vivid, phase. No other zone but the threshold of the tropics could hang out such intense glamour—where the glades seem breathless from the spell of their own fairylike beauty. There is another side to the picture, of course. Though fortunately little noticed upon the steamer itself, there is sufficient evidence of it upon the shore in the eyes of one who is acquainted with the region. In a grassy nook beneath some trees half a dozen horses are grazing. Their tails are moving ceaselessly, sweeping in monotonous rhythm from side to side. The reason is—flies, and mosquitoes, and a host of kindred pests! There is no doubt that the animals would prefer a yard of Buenos Aires Camp to a mile of this idyllic country. Not that they have given the district itself a fair chance, since the river's edge is obviously the chosen home of all such insects.

The evidence of human life has become rarer. A canoe or two have been passed that lie up beneath the overhanging branches, and the primitive craft are difficult enough to distinguish from the tangle

of logs and tree-trunks amidst which they float. The occasional reed roofs of the huts, too, few and far between, are almost equally difficult to distinguish from the leafage and dense creepers that surround and almost overwhelm them. From the human point of view there is much that undoubtedly is wasted. A series of tiny semicircular beaches, for instance, that stand out in pure whiteness from the surrounding green. Their edges display a peculiarity of the river soil. The bank protrudes perhaps two or three feet from the surface of the water. Of this the lower half is of a deep chocolate colour, the line that divides it from the white being perfectly level and straight—a superimposing of colour that brings to mind the fancy work of pastry-cooks.

The *San Martin* has drawn up at Las Palmas on the Chaco shore. Like Piraguacito, the place taps a country of important industries, including that of quebracho and of sugar as well. Like Piraguacito again, it hangs out very modest signs of its true commercial importance. An engine is steaming up through the woodland upon the light, narrow rails, drawing a few trucks in its wake. But such insignificant affairs as an engine and a few trucks altogether fail to dominate the wealth of nature here. Their progress is diffident and apologetic, and even such impressive rumbling as they would make is lost and deadened amidst the leafage. For all that, the enterprise of the company, I believe,

that works the district here is praiseworthy in the extreme.

There is a family encampment here that could hardly be excelled in its ethics of sheer simplicity. Two canoes have been placed side by side and a third laid across them. Eked out by an impromptu canvas awning, the combination has become a dwelling! Within its shelter the various members of a dusky family are reclining—the recumbent pose need not in this case imply an indolent temperament, since the lowly edifice leaves no other choice of position. General utility is always admirable; yet who would have suspected what could be done with three canoes and a small piece of canvas!

Onwards again, through great clumps of camelota —the floating water-hyacinth with its lilac blossoms that comes sailing down the stream. There are crocodiles now upon the sandy spits that jut out into the river. Singly first, and afterwards in whole companies, they are basking in the sun. Grey-black in colour, it is only the sluggish movement of the head with which they greet the steamer's advent that permits them to be distinguished from the stranded logs and tree-trunks that surround them. Nevertheless there are a few, of more nervous temperament than the rest, who refuse to await the vessel's passage, and slide their scaly forms sullenly downwards into the water. Perhaps they are wise, since their bodies not infrequently form targets for bullets from the steamer—a somewhat profitless form

of sport, since the result of a successful hit is merely the floating of a dead crocodile at the mercy of the stream.

The Bougainvillea creeper has now come to smother the forest trees, covering at times the green of three or four together in a gorgeous purple sheath of blossoms. Hanging side by side with these are the white flowers of a great convolvulus. *Diego de Noche*, it is termed, since its blooms are supposed to be most resplendent at night. If this be so, the plant must be burning the candle at both ends, as its beauty by daylight is sufficiently marked. Indeed, a pleasant feat of the imagination must be suspected in the nomenclature in this instance, although it is true that the petals refuse to close during the hours of darkness.

Perhaps there has already been a surfeit of talk concerning such ephemeral things as the flaunting signals hung out by mere plants of neither commercial nor industrial interest. Yet there is one that I cannot pass by, since even in these very radiant garden stretches it stands alone. A giant scarlet flower, a foot and more of flaming spikes set in the centre of the green spears of a cactus, it is seen only at rare intervals. Where it reposes, the flaring glow upon the bank marks its site at the distance of a mile, a veritable lighthouse of colour!

But in all this the human interest is sadly lacking. And it is an axiom in the ethics of writing that nature unadorned or unadulterated by humanity

A MACÁ CHIEFTAIN AND HIS DAUGHTERS

WILD FISHERMEN

is unworthy of description at serious length. The apple in the garden of Eden was noteworthy for its influence rather than its appearance. Yet surely untrodden nature loses nothing at times from the absence of orange peel, cigarette ends, discarded boots, and similar evidences of the march of progress! Moreover, it is impossible for the conscientious chronicler to introduce folk and buildings into spots where they do not exist. A more serious danger than that of mere immorality would certainly attend the attempt—nothing less than correction and exposure at the hands of another traveller familiar with the district.

Indeed, on this particular stretch of the journey it is necessary to seek the human interest within the throbbing hull of the *San Martin* herself. There is no lack of the commodity here. A similar process of metamorphosis to that in nature has been at work amongst the passengers. The exchanges at the various ports have left on board an altogether insignificant remainder of the company that originally embarked at Buenos Aires and Rosario. The frontier officer is doubtless at the moment riding through the forest to his post; the governor's wife and daughter are at home in Government House; duty has already claimed the officials of the ministry of agriculture; the priest, estancieros, merchants, and commercial travellers—all but a very few have landed and been scattered abroad, each on his different path. The Paraguayans, Bolivians, and

Brazilians remain as a matter of course. Also the English missionaries, equally as a matter of course, since their destination lies yet many hundreds of miles to the north. It is pleasant to remark that they are treated with consummate respect by all in a company that—to say the least of it—takes small chances of suffering from a priest-ridden state.

The places of the departed have been filled by a gathering of a far less stereotyped order than the first. The personalities of those who have come on board from the small riverside ports have become as unconventional as their natural surroundings. The ladies are as graceful as ever. But they are darker complexioned, more languid, with costumes that have taken on the gaudy tints of the flowers. They are expert employers of the fan, moreover, and flirt with the coquettish instruments in a fashion that has long fallen out of date in the south.

A similar individuality pervades the persons of the men. The pattern and colour of their clothes is at the mercy of no hide-bound tailor's regulation. They are free men in all things—from their gestures of declamation to the somewhat extravagant flourishing of the now inevitable toothpick. Indeed, a comparison between them and the few remaining men from the south leads to the conviction that this northernmost region is to all intents and purposes a colony of the central provinces that retains its colonial atmosphere and its liberty from hampering conventions.

The degree of sociability exhibited remains much the same. Indeed, the gregarious instincts of the travellers—that at the same time are pleasantly innocent of all taint of intrusion and boredom—have made of the ship's company a family party into the midst of which the new arrivals are assured of a very cordial welcome. There are groups that discuss politics, others that play cards; there are circles formed about a guitar player or two, and gatherings that comment upon the panorama of the landscape, and watch the sunsets that come to flood the steamer in a glowing bath of red fire.

The steerage passengers on the topmost deck are in another case. The poor fellows are frankly discontented. Not without reason. Enforced familiarity with the sun-rays has not bred contempt. They had thought to labour in a climate akin to that of Buenos Aires Province, and here, while Paraguay still lies between them and their destination in the Brazils, the climate of the unsheltered deck is sufficient warning of what they may expect nearer the equator. Rather late in the day they are putting two and two together, and the result of the calculation is a vehement expression of opinion in the freest Anglo-Saxon as rendered in the docks and in the forecastle. In this the West Indian negroes join with gusto—from motives of emulation and the pride of comradeship rather than from any sense of personal discomfort. But the case of the rest—aliens ill-advised, ill-found, and ill-prepared—

is lamentable enough. As they themselves complain with the addition of innumerable adjectives, it is sufficient to try the patience of a saint; and, whatever they might be, these are most emphatically not saints.

The missionaries are effecting in practical fashion what they can towards the comfort of these luckless adventurers; but that is necessarily little enough. The situation lies at the door of those who contracted for the labour, and who obtained the recruits by means of leaving many things unsaid. In this case nemesis was at hand, and discomfiture came to the unscrupulous folk as well as to their victims. But of what befell the company of wanderers—of how they abandoned the vessel in Paraguay, and left the field of operations in the far north to continue to await their advent, which perhaps it does to this day—of all this, there is neither scope nor space for the telling in these pages.

CHAPTER XXVI

TO THE NORTH BY STREAM (*continued*)

The Paraguay River—An Idyll of the Creeks—The *Carpincho*—Humaytâ—The First Paraguayan Port—A Relic of the War of 1865–70—The Tyrant Lopez—Incidents of the Struggle—The Discipline of Death—Subtropical Flowers and Fruits—The River Bermejo—Its Turbulent Propensities—Fluvial Transformations—Navigation and its Difficulties—Formosa—Nocturnal Insect Life—Drowning Fire—The Song of the Frogs—The Apparition of the Boulder—A Pioneer Mountain—Asuncion—Appearance of the Port—The Battleships of Three Nations—The *Libertad*—An Incident at the Journey's End.

THE *San Martin* is ploughing the waters of the Paraguay river. In one sense she has entered upon the last lap of her journey to Asuncion, although the mouths of a number of tributaries have to be passed ere the destination is reached. The stream has narrowed again, and a series of perfectly enchanting creeks make glistening breaks in the banks on either hand. The vessel is steaming between two countries now. The territory to the right is Paraguayan, although the opposite shore remains Argentine.

Now and again a glimpse of human life is vouchsafed. It may be a tiny settlement whose couple of houses mingle their reeds and thatch with the

vegetation. In the foreground is the inevitable small collection of canoes, and to the front of these again is frequently a group of men and boys revelling up to their shoulders in the sun-heated waters. A few pages back I found myself involved in an argument concerning the respective claims to description of humanity, nature, and landscape. Here, fortunately, is a fragment of sheer human interest at the mouth of one of these many creeks.

A man and a girl—you will see that when the river can be induced to take these matters in hand it does the thing properly, and is unstinting in the orthodox attributes to a sentimental situation—have led a horse down to the waters of the stream. It is obviously a task that the youth could have effected perfectly well alone. Indeed, were the girl's presence of any real assistance, the situation, properly speaking, would never have existed. As it is, the horse is in deep water, the man up to his knees, and the girl, dry-footed, upon the bank. Above the still waters of the small tributary current the leaves and branches have arched so densely that only a few round sun-spots are dancing upon the earth and stream. Thus the group is set in a shaded tunnel lightened by the purple and white sprays of blossom and by the intermittent flashes of the water. The man has stretched out his hand to the girl—an *invitation à l'eau* against which she protests in the accepted and coquettish manner. The dusky charmer is obviously a flirt. She has

extemporised a fan from a cut palm leaf! She is whisking it, moreover, with a subtle and alluring eloquence worthy of a thing of pearl and ostrich feather. And then she has given him her hand with reluctance, and he has pulled her to him—just as she had always intended that he should. With a little squeak and a flutter of bright pink drapery she has been drawn into the water. The youth, intent on duty if only for a moment, turns to splash the horse. The girl, who apparently has her own views on the point, immediately sets to work, and splashes *him*.

A very everyday occurrence, this. A little interlude of action and emotion that is drawn out from the common ruck of such intersexual gambollings merely by reason of the stage upon which it is consummated! Which proves the proportionate value of romance, as enacted amidst the palms and glowing blossoms, or as perpetrated at the edge of a Hampstead Heath pond.

The Paraguay, however, does not deal only in such scenes as these. A little further on it produces a denizen of quite another kind. There is a ripple on the waters, the apparition of a large, round, and very hideous snout, and a few moments later a *carpincho*, the quaint water hog of the south of the continent, has dragged his heavy body up the bank. Brown, stout, and covered by sparse bristles, the creature, though harmless enough, is amazingly ugly. As though aware of his physical shortcomings, he

loses no time in scrambling his way through the undergrowth out of sight.

The *San Martin* is slowing down now, to halt at Humaytá, the first Paraguayan port. The distinction is marked in the first place by the flag that flies at the stern of the official boat. Instead of the blue and white of Argentina, the colours are the Paraguayan red, white, and blue.

At the back of the small landing-stage are the long, low buildings of the barracks. For Humaytá is a garrison town, and groups of soldiers clad in the now almost universal khaki are watching the steamer with the interest that such an advent excites in a spot that knows few happenings.

Not that Humaytá has always known its present slumberous atmosphere of peace. Dominating the town are the remains of a great church. Of dull red brick, the structure, though lacking its former height, dwarfs all the other buildings of the place. Its massive walls are battered and holed to an astonishing extent. From the remnants of the last standing spire to the lowest tiers of masonry it yawns both in small circular holes and in great rents that hopelessly confuse the original design of the church.

It is a relic of the war of 1865–70, when Paraguay, single-handed, fought the republics of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. In all the history of nations no more remarkable campaign than this has been waged. Ground down beneath the heel of her own

dictator Lopez, in the midst of the almost incredible oppression from which she was suffering, the small republic turned, at bay, against the foreign forces, and fought to the very last gasp. The tyrant Lopez, utterly ruthless and merciless as he was, possessed the courage of a lion. And the Paraguayans, forgetful of their own grievances against the despot when the bullets were once flying, seconded his efforts in a marvellously thorough fashion.

Indeed, considering the recent date of the strife, the manner in which operations were carried on is amazing to contemplate. At the tyrant's orders companies of delicate ladies were set to march for days on end to some remote spot where they could till the land and sow it—for the army had to be fed at all costs, even at this! So it was that these poor ladies, utterly unused to hardship of any kind, went stumbling along through morass and forest, feeding on wild berries and occasionally upon the flesh of donkeys. Should one fall out by the way, she was speared to death by the escort upon the spot—*pour encourager les autres*, since the army had to be fed! When in the neighbourhood of civilisation the women were herded together at night in a cattle *corral* in order that the chances of escape might be minimised. Thus many Paraguayans of good parentage, now actually living, first saw the light in the trampled space that lay within the humble stockade.

The measures adopted with regard to the army itself were certainly no less severe. Indeed, Lopez was

wont to carry the theory of victory or death to an uncomfortable point—to his credit be it said that he himself ended by testing the latter alternative. In the meanwhile officers were executed for mere remarks whose tone fell beneath the standard of confidence that Lopez had set up for himself. One, for instance, was shot for having announced in the course of his duty that the enemy was strongly entrenched! Another met his end on account of an unguarded speech to the effect that the Paraguayan army was accustomed to count the enemy's losses and to forget its own. As to the private soldiers, stragglers were bayoneted as mercilessly as were the women.

But it is impossible to speak at length here of this extraordinary and tragic war, whose conclusion saw Paraguay almost altogether bereft of its male population, lads and all, since boys of ten years old were wont to serve in the ranks in the final stages. The events are worthy of separate mention, and I am endeavouring to deal with them in another volume.

One more incident, however, I will refer to, since it is concerned with this very town of Humaytá, and sheds yet a little more light upon the methods of the dictator. Humaytá was attacked in force by the allies. The defenders, under the command of Colonel Francisco Martinez, offered the usual strenuous resistance. They eventually took refuge in the church, continuing the fight even when the edifice was bombarded by the heavy artillery of

a river flotilla of gunboats. In the end surrender was inevitable.

The rage of Lopez on receipt of the news of the disaster was a thing to be remembered. Moreover, since Martinez was not available, of whom should he make the example that had become necessary in far less serious cases than this? He was not long in solving this latter difficulty. He seized the colonel's wife. The lady chanced to be a distant cousin of his own. But ties of relationship were of small account to a man who had caused a brother to be shot and a mother to be flogged. So the colonel's wife was dragged along with the main army in its arduous retreat. She was subjected to many kinds of torture, in the course of which most of her hair was pulled from her head. In the end the bullets of a firing platoon vouchsafed her a merciful release. Of this tragedy—only one out of an innumerable number, after all—the ruins of Humaytá church, shattered and crumbling, stand as a fittingly melancholy memorial.

After this point the course of the river becomes clearly defined. The clusters of islands have long ere this given way to single flecks of land comparatively few and far between, and these in turn have now disappeared. The intermittent cliffs have sunk down completely; nevertheless, the banks through which the stream wells are more clearly accentuated than before. The scarlet of the poinsettia has come to dominate all the other tints. Dappling the giant

trees and the saplings as well, it abounds as thickly as the fall of a crimson snowstorm. Even the purple of the Bougainvillea and the white sprays of the convolvulus, intensely arresting in themselves, can make no head from the spectacular point of view against the other vivid and all-pervading glow.

The little ports on either bank nestle now amidst the broad, light-green leaves of banana plantations, while the palm groves have increased in extent, and in many places have ousted all other species of vegetation. Such small boats as ply to and fro are almost invariably laden with fruit and minor farm produce. Melons, enormous tomatoes, peppers, and pineapples cumber their decks, cheek by jowl with baskets of eggs and the gourds of the maté plant. In charge of barefooted men, and women whose headgear has assumed the form of a turban, the little vessels glide to and fro, eloquent testimonies to the fertility of the land.

The *San Martin* is approaching Bermejo, a point that is of no little importance to the entire river system that lies below it. For here the turbulent River Bermejo, that has come down from the north-west through its muddy bed, pours its waters into the main stream of the Paraguay. The big tributary is the most turbid of the whole network of currents. Indeed, its brown, soil-laden waters are responsible to a great degree for the staining of the arteries not only of the Paraguay but of the Paraná as well. Once above the point of its junction the stream of

the Paraguay is comparatively limpid. Just below it, on the other hand, the rapid current, whirling and eddying from the impetus of the Bermejo's onslaught, appears dense to a degree of consistency that is difficult to associate with a liquid in such volatile motion. It is as though fluid mud were tumbling about with mercurial agility, which, indeed, is only a minor exaggeration of the actual state of the turmoil.

The operations of the Bermejo afford another instance of the tremendous force that is latent in these great rivers. Some five years ago the stream grew tired of the monotony of a bed that had served it for a couple of generations. So in the course of an exceptional flood it leaped out over its banks and charged headlong over the country. Tumbling forward over an entirely new track, the current burst into the Paraguay half a dozen miles to the north of its former point of junction.

Its previous mouth is still plainly to be distinguished. The bank at the spot retires in a dead, low flat from the main river. The spot is verdant now, and covered with young trees, since nature has already demanded compensation for those others swept away by the river in the delirium of its gigantic freak. Exactly in the centre of the receding plain is a swelling hill topped by tall and spreading trees that have attained to full maturity. This hill was once an island, and over the plain about it flowed the stream upon which, until recently, steamers, sailing vessels, and rowing boats were wont to navigate.

The Bermejo, however, is not alone in these irresponsibilities of behaviour. The actions of each ramification of the great river system, and even those of the Paraguay and of the mighty Paraná itself, are no more to be counted upon than are the whims of the most feminine of women. The waters flow upon beds as uneasy as the streams are fickle. Throughout the course of the rivers yesterday's deeps are to-day's shallows, and vice versâ. Here a corner that projected will have been shorn clear away by the indignant waters, and there a new sand-bank will stretch half-way across the stream, built up in the space of a few days, or weeks.

As for the islands, at the mercy of the currents as they are, their various transformations are continuous and endless. A few weeks' absence alone would suffice to throw a conscientious student of their physical geography out of date. The navigation of the upper reaches, in consequence, is no light matter. As the captain of the *San Martin* emphatically asserts, the course of no two journeys, by reason of the variation of the river bed, is exactly the same. Even were the steaming chart permanent, the accurate track would be sufficiently hard to follow. The movements of the vessel as she feels her way upstream are amazing to watch. After a short spell of progress in the centre of the stream she will sheer off to the right, hug the bank so closely that her paddle-wheels almost touch the soil for a couple of hundred yards, and then swerve almost

within her own length, to make directly for the opposite shore. From there she will start outwards again after a while to perform a further series of the ceaseless zig-zag manœuvres. The distance from Buenos Aires to Asuncion by river is in theory a little over a thousand miles. In practice at least an additional quarter might be placed to the credit of the mileage.

It is impossible not to wonder a little at the watermanship of these captains of the river boats. For the vessels continue on their course by night as well as by day upon the upper stretches that are destitute of all lighting, buoys, and artificial aids to navigation. The steamer will persist in ploughing across the waters two sides of a triangle—never, of course, closing the third—when for mile after mile no salient point upon the shore stands out to mark the necessary pattern of the angles. To the layman's eye, at all events, the darkness reveals nothing beyond a dim, unbroken and level line that signals the bank on either hand. Question the captain on the point, and he will laugh with the ease of the expert. He will assert that an experience of twenty years has taught him every bend and shallow in the whole of the thousand miles' course—as nearly, that is, as the continually changing conditions will permit the knowledge. It must be so. The mere fact of the steamer continuing upon her course proves that the boast is no vain one.

The consequences of an error in navigation are

certainly not serious. The result is a gentle and almost imperceptible sliding on the mud, the cessation of the paddles' beat, and the halting of the vessel. Then, with the engines reversed, the paddles thud out again, and the mud comes welling in chocolate eddies to the surface, as the vessel backs slowly over the soft, yielding ground into deep water once more. Should the bed of the stream have undergone one of its more sudden and radical changes, the delay may prove a little more prolonged, and the battle with the clinging bottom more arduous; but the rarity of the instances in which the ground is touched at all affords a striking testimonial to the efficiency of the navigators. Whether in darkness or daylight the vessels feel their way metaphorically —seldom actually.

Night falls at Formosa, capital of the province of that name and the last Argentine town of importance upon the Paraguay. The spot—in the language of the guide-book—is charmingly situated upon hilly ground, and its public gardens are embellished by the wealth of verdure that might be expected in such a spot. Nocturnal insect life has been stirred here to the depths of its fragile community by the advent of the brilliantly illuminated steamer. The globes of the electric lights constitute, of course, the chief centres of these social gatherings. Not only is their surface darkened by the bodies of myriad clinging insects, but there are clouds of creatures about them as well that vibrate in a strange and airy density. In

view of the proximity of the forest the presumption is that there are mosquitoes amongst the number. A very natural surmise that endures for some five minutes after the anchor has been dropped! At the end of that period uncertainty has given way to very definite conviction. There *are* mosquitoes on board! There are quite a number, and they are very thirsty.

As a compensation there exist pleasanter creatures in the air—the great fireflies that perform no lightning feats of winking, but sail steadily through the night with their green-white lamps burning with an unbroken soft radiance. I have described these brilliant torch-bearers before; but their advent in the fire and flesh seems always accompanied by the same charm as the glimpse of the first one compelled.

On the surface of the stream, borne rapidly downwards by the tide, go innumerable lumps of phosphorescence. To one ignorant of their significance the shimmering points would seem a fitting complement to the lines of flying light that cross each other from out of the blackness of the night. In a sense they are indeed this, for there is a closer connexion between the two than was at first suspected. There is tragedy upon the face of the waters. Each point of illumination that goes whirling down upon the eddies of the tide represents a fallen angel of a firefly. Caught by the waters, and drowning, each is in the throes of death—a brilliant death that lights up the shadowy waters. Surely no creature ever

strove to mark the pathos of its end beneath a greater semblance of pomp and gaiety.

If funeral song were required for the likes of these it is provided in liberal measure by the frogs. The dirge is less monotonous than usual, owing to the astonishing variety of the keys employed. Indeed, the vocal powers of the Formosa frogs are as amazing in compass as they are in strength. Added to the muffled rattle of the ordinary swamp musician is a shrill treble and a deep booming, the contributions respectively of a smaller brother and of a far more magnificent specimen of the tribe. There is another, too, that bursts out at intervals to join the orchestra with a noise that exactly resembles the whirring of a steam saw as it eats its way through the timber. The night is vibrating with the extraordinary medley of notes—a foundation of sound that throbs at the back of every more intermittent noise and that to the accustomed ear dies away in time to the point of imperceptibility by the mere force of its incessation.

The following day is the last of the journey. The river has narrowed still more, and the details of the scenery are pleasantly near—too near, indeed, for the comfort of the crocodiles on the bank whose lazy basking is rudely disturbed by the wash from the paddle-wheels. The aspect of the banks is much as before—a panorama of spreading palm and forest trees with their festoons of flowers that enclose now and again the banana plantations of the tiny settlements.

TRAVEL IN THE CHACO

SPORT IN A NORTHERN SWAMP

At an especially narrow bend is a buoy, the first to be sighted for several hundred miles. The *San Martin* performs a series of twists and turns, and after a number of tremendously complicated fluvial gymnastics comes in sight of some stone buildings, large and imposing compared with what has gone before. The journey's end is almost in sight. Then occurs a feature that is altogether new in the history of the trip. Great red stone boulders strew the bank to the right. At the end of five days' travel through the soft, alluvial soil, innocent even of a pebble, these strange, bold rocks are viewed with a certain amazement that is natural but illogical. The river, too, has felt the influence of others of these unwonted companions that have obviously pressed downwards beneath the waters themselves. The surface of the stream no longer coils and circles in smooth eddies. As though braced and stung into new life by the hardy exhilaration of the rocks, it has broken into pert ripples and into rank upon rank of tiny splashing waves. In a joyous fit of irresponsibility it is leaping like a trout where before it had slid with the monotonous gliding of an eel.

Presently—another new and surprising thing!—the boulders climb upwards to mount the sides of a sugar-loaf mountain. The elevation is of no particular height, it is true; but it is distinctly and unmistakably a mountain. Boulder-strewn beneath its covering of palms and forest trees, it

stands to mark the northern frontiers of the rich plains and the beginning of a new and wilder order of nature. Beyond this pioneer mountain stretches of red cliff rise by the water-side, elevations that almost exactly resemble the ruddy Devonshire bluffs. They have one peculiarity that is essentially their own, however. Their surface is honeycombed by a series of caves whose narrow mouths gape longitudinally, and are thus exactly parallel with each other. From their appearance they might have been slit downwards in rows, each by the same giant instrument.

The red cliffs are densely topped with green from amidst which the roofs of substantial houses peer out. These grow more numerous as the *San Martin* rounds the final bluff, and enters at last into sight of her destination. To the right, the houses and spires of Asuncion cluster on the river bank, and retreat inland in an imposing spread that rises and sinks with the contour of the land. The opposite shore, that has remained level and unbroken all the while, has opened out here to admit the broad sheet of the Pilcomayo river that flows in from the north-west. South of the stream extend the last stretches of Argentine territory, for the Pilcomayo is the frontier river.

The *San Martin* has warped alongside now, and has come to rest by the shore of the capital of the pleasant little republic from the boundaries of which radiate the lands of Argentina, Brazil, and

Bolivia. Asuncion at the moment of arrival is a cosmopolitan port so far as shipping is concerned, considering the fact that it is situated over a thousand miles inland from the sea-coast. Three gunboats of different nationalities are lying at anchor opposite the town, vessels that fly respectively the Argentine, Brazilian, and Paraguayan flag. The two former are trim and warlike craft, each representing merely a unit in its class. The Paraguayan ship is of an altogether different species; it is modelled on the lines of a dredger, with funnel set well back in the accepted fashion near the stern. That the vessel is modelled on the lines of a dredger is not surprising, in view of the fact that the *Libertad* actually began life in that somewhat humble status of marine existence. Its social promotion is represented by grey paint, uniforms, and a couple of guns placed in the bow. Nevertheless the most has been made of this lion in sheep's clothing, and the accurate strokes of a boat's crew that are even now pulling towards the shore speak well for the training of the men.

As an object of intimidation or an example of marine might, it must be confessed that the *Libertad* leaves something to be desired. Yet, such as it is, it represents the Paraguayan navy. The *Libertad* stands quite alone. In the converted dredger are vested all the various duties of defence, from those of the submarine and torpedo boat to those of the giant battleship. As a matter of fact, the craft has already smelt powder more than once, and the

result of more than one revolution has been turned by means of the two guns in her bow. One may laugh a little at the aspect of the *Libertad*, much as one would at the sight of a volunteer in tweed clothes enlivened by top boots and a dragoon's helmet. At the same time one may make quite certain that, if the occasion arise, the small vessel will bear itself intrepidly and blaze away with its two small guns until the last shot is fired. For the Paraguayan, as the history of the country proves, is a born fighter, whether by land or river.

As is equally obvious from its history, the small republic has known its troubles. Better days are now undoubtedly in store for the land; but it has invariably borne the most depressing stages of its existence with the same commendable light-heartedness, and has continued to pay interest upon its national liabilities with the regularity of most honourable clockwork.

Indeed, there is a certain cheerful air of irresponsibility about the Paraguayan that is delightful to watch. When we arrived at Asuncion it chanced that there was no cab within the precincts of the port, an omission that seemed severely to vex the hospitable Paraguayan mind, whether on the part of real acquaintances or on that of stray dock hands and women lace-sellers. While numerous volunteers went in search of an erring vehicle we waited in the shade—most of the inhabitants appeared to be waiting in the shade just then. Suddenly a man came out

from the direction of the harbour, running at the top of his bent, but smiling as he ran. Thirty seconds later a white-uniformed official careered along in the wake of the runner. He, too, was obviously amused, since he was laughing outright. The crowd—men, women, and children—began to run after the pair, and a policeman, whose white attire had enlivened the shade of an arcade, joined in the cheerful tumult with a chuckle as broad as that of all the rest.

The episode consisted of the chase of an escaped prisoner. It was difficult to say whom the incident amused the most, whether the chief actor, the officials, or the crowd. Yet the details of the incident were energetically enacted, and the recapture of the fugitive sent the curtain down on the drama. This, however, was gleaned later. For just then some unexpectedly favourable concatenation of events sent a vehicle upon the scene, and with some little reluctance we left the shores of the Paraguay river.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CHACO

A Contrast of Northern and Southern Ethics—Geography of the District—Some Physical Aspects—Warlike Indians—Native Customs and Weapons—Points of Resemblance between all American Tribes—Conscientious Scalping—Matters of Costume—A Relic of the Incas—Indian Life and Habits—Past Restrictions and Present Enterprise—Labour and its Reward—The Quebracho Industry—The Forestal Company—The Algarrobo Tree—Its Provision of Fodder and Beverage—The Caraguatá—Tobacco—Peculiarities of Soil—Strange Fish—Chaco Exploration—A New River and the Boundary Question—A Lost Tribe—Some Beasts of the Land—A Tumultuous Tapir—Animal Life.

ONE of the most interesting phases in the present development of Argentina is the subjugation of the far northern territories to the progressive spirit of the hour. The Republic still possesses its primitive corner, a Tom Tiddler's ground of savagery, whose area is melting with ever-increasing rapidity beneath the forces of civilisation that are bearing in upon it from without. Although both possess a kindred lack of broken ground, the difference between the Chaco plains and those of the centre is as marked as that between night and day. For one thing, the pampa presents the least secretive of all landscapes.

With its wide area open and bare to the sunlight from horizon to horizon the pastoral land revels in an ingenuous frankness that renders its entire character exposed at the first glimpse.

There is romance and legend connected with this free *campo,* it is true. But both are essentially human and open of their kind. The pampa sings of love and the daring deeds of men, just as does the ocean, and just as do other parts of the earth—although many of these latter to a less sentimental tune. The romance of the Chaco—for all the natural clearings that it holds—is of another kind. It reeks of dark glades where the southernmost orchids hang from the branches above ; of swamp and morass dimly shaded, by the side of which the snake coils insidiously about the roots and subtropical plants. It savours of Indian ambush and sudden attack, of flights of wood-tipped arrows springing out from behind the vegetation, and of the mysterious worship of a forest people.

To deal first of all with the physical aspects of the Chaco : the country may be said to be a vast plain that extends over the borders into Paraguay, and to a minor extent into Bolivia as well. So far as Argentina is concerned, the boundaries of this characteristic expanse are sharply drawn by the Rivers Paraguay and lower Paraná. The Chaco, in fact, comprises that northernmost part of Argentina bounded on the west by the mountains of Jujuy, Salta, and Tucuman, from which latter point the

frontier line travels south-east to meet the River Paraná, with the province of Santa Fé as its southern limit.

The strip of country, by the way, that actually borders upon Paraguay to the north is officially known as the province of Formosa. This, however, for all physical and practical purposes, constitutes merely a portion of the Chaco known by another name. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that exactly the same applies to the northern portion of the province of Santa Fé, where the nature of the land is identical.

The trend of the Chaco is from north-west to south-east. The surface of nearly its entire extent falls in this direction with an almost imperceptible regularity at the rate of about one yard in every five miles. Owing to this, not only do all the rivers and streams run in parallel beds to the south-east, but even the configuration of the forests and lagoons adapts itself to the prevailing conditions as well.

So much for the broad physical aspects of a land that until recent years remained comparatively unknown. Dense forests, swamps, beasts of prey, venomous reptiles, fever, and hostile Indians—all these have stood in the way of effective exploration and settlement. It must be admitted that the category of evils is alarmingly comprehensive. Yet the terrors offered by each have abated largely of recent years, and in such parts as have become colonised the majority have disappeared altogether.

The chief peril in the past has undoubtedly lain in the warlike propensities of the Chaco Indians. Although infinitely more numerous and far more happily situated than their brethren in Tierra del Fuego, the intelligence of these northern Indians is scarcely at all in excess of that of the southern tribes. Neither, for instance, are able to count to a greater number than five. Indeed, although their lives are waged in surroundings so different as those of the northern heat and southern cold, there are many other points that they possess in common. The dwelling-places of either race, for instance, are made of branches crudely entwined upon which the dried grasses are flung. The habitations of the northern zone, however, are rather more elaborate in their construction than the others. Fishers and hunters both, it is the Chaco Indians who have found nature incomparably the more prolific in the supply of their very few and simple wants.

The chief tribes of these northern Indians are the *Tobas* and the *Matacos*, although many others exist beyond. The *Tobas* are the most warlike of all, and it is upon their frontiers in especial that the chain of Argentine military outposts has now been established for many decades. The traditional weapons of all these tribes are lances, tipped with wood, and bows and arrows. These arrows show no little ingenuity in their construction. The shaft is of bamboo, from which the notches of the joints have been pared away in order to leave

the surface smooth and regular. Stuck within the end of the bamboo shaft is the dart itself, a point of very hard wood a foot or more in length, with a spiral series of barbs, accurately carved, extending from one end to another.

These arrows, for all their lightness, are formidable weapons. Sent from a powerful bow, they will pierce a plank an inch in thickness, to say nothing of the body of a jaguar or of a human being. The bowstring was originally wont to be contrived from the sinews of ostriches, or, more recently, from hide.

The Chaco Indians are responsible for yet one more instance of those curious points of similarity that seem to exist between the widely separated native races of the Americas. Their dances, for example, are said to resemble those of the celebrated redskins of the northern continent, and the practice of scalping has certainly existed until quite recently —if it does not still obtain—amongst the tribes of the Chaco. These southern warriors, however, effect the unpleasant process in a more thorough fashion, since they annex the greater portion of the inimical skull, and, having scooped out its contents, are wont to employ the grim vessel as a drinking-cup.

Away from the frontiers of civilisation the costume of the Chaco Indian still consists exclusively of a few tufts of ostrich and parrot feathers disposed casually about the body in negligent and tenuous ornamentation. Those of the Toba tribe who live

in the more unexplored and distant regions are said still to retain a white linen head-dress, the pattern of which exactly resembles the ancient helmet of the Incas. Until recent years this was certainly worn by the majority of the tribe throughout the country it dominated. The coincidence of this headgear may seem a little strange; but, as a matter of fact, there is no reason to suppose that the Chaco Indians were not in part subject to Inca rule, and therefore to those influences and customs of which this may well be the last survival. A fairly general habit among the males is to deprive the faces of all hair, the depilation extending even to the eyebrows.

Although the majority of the Indian customs are on the eve of suffering an inevitable change, there are many that hold good on the outskirts of civilisation itself. Even there the majority of the natives are content with a bag loincloth, although the more enlightened have already reconciled themselves to the comparative intricacies of the *peon's* dress. The stone axe of tradition with its shaft some four feet in length is still in common use, and in many districts the method of fire-making remains as curious as before. In order to effect this, two pieces of wood are necessary—a flat piece and a stick-like section that is often supplied by the detaching from its shaft of an arrow head. The latter, its point inserted within a slight hole in the flat piece of timber, is made to revolve with an

incredible rapidity between the open hands by a piston-like movement. After a while the point, eating further into the surface of the wood, produces flame. In Africa, I believe, this rotary motion is effected by the aid of string employed as about a spinning-top. To achieve the same result by the hands alone is more rare.

A Franciscan mission, established just south of the Pilcomayo, is effecting very good work amongst the natives in the cause of civilisation, amongst other things training the Indians in agriculture, and especially in the cultivation of bananas, maize, beans, mandioc, and sugar. The temperament of the Indian, however, does not lend itself readily to manual labour, surrounded as he is by natural and spontaneous products that suffice for his needs.

From time to time traces of former missions have been discovered, and some thirty years ago a bronze bell was found on the site of one of these by Giovanni Pelleschi, an Italian engineer and explorer. The endings of these heroic efforts of the past are only to be surmised; yet it is practically certain that they were lamentable and violent.

It is time, however, to turn from the picturesque, and incidentally bloodthirsty, attributes of the Indian to his industrial possibilities, for that is the direction in which the spirit of the age is now leading him. Undoubtedly one of the greatest civilising influences is that of travel. In the past this has been sternly denied to the Chaco dweller.

A WOUNDED GIANT FOX

THE INCEPTION OF FRATERNITY

Each tribe was provided with its own set of *tolderias* —crude wigwam villages—and its own defined frontiers. To trespass beyond these meant immediate battle, and a gory exchange of skull trophies ; for the laws of landownership and boundary etiquette were enforced with the utmost rigour. Thus in an era of peace the territory of each remained unaltered and intact ; in a period of warfare it swelled a little or shrunk, according as good or bad fortune ruled. But, whether large or small, the tribal lands held their owners close prisoners. Since the price of a passport was death, the Chaco remained innocent of a single native globe-trotter.

It is only of quite recent years that the comprehension of the broader industrial benefits has broken down to a great extent the network of these inter-tribal barriers. For the first time in their history, the representatives of these minor nations may cross their neighbours' countries in comparative safety. Great numbers have already taken the fullest advantage of this new and favourable order of affairs, and, indeed, it has of late years become quite a usual matter for a native to work on the construction of one of Messrs. Freund & Duffield's railway lines in the neighbourhood of the Paraná or Paraguay, and then, during the sugar-cane season, to cross the entire breadth of the Chaco from east to west and to work upon the famous industrial estates of the Messrs. Leach in the neighbourhood of Jujuy—gentlemen whose names can scarcely fail to go down to history for their

monumental work effected in the civilisation of these very Indians—a pioneer campaign of peace that has thawed the ice of mutual dread and distrust, and that has brought in thousands of natives to work contentedly and eagerly in the fields.

At the end of the sugar-cane season these Indians will return, travelling some five hundred miles and more through the forests and swamps and streams of the tribal country, and will set to work upon the banks of the great rivers to hew quebracho timber or to assist in further railroad construction.

It is a fact that, once within their own particular realms, the homeward march of the representatives of two or three tribes who have laboured peacefully together in the white man's country frequently brings out a strong dose of the old Adam. On such occasions the return from harvesting is marked by a continuous series of combats that strew the road with impromptu milestones in the shape of corpses.

But the material benefits that accrue from these opportunities of labour are so obvious and so much appreciated by even the least intelligent of the race that the revolution in the warlike propensities of the natives is spreading at a great pace. It is true that one of the first purchases they are wont to make with their industrial earnings is that of rifles and guns! But in this case the last state is not necessarily worse than the first, since the beginnings have set in of a new reluctance to use these weapons for other purposes than those of the chase!

The principal industry of the Chaco is that of the quebracho timber. The area within which are comprised these valuable forests is very great. It extends, indeed, from the north of Santa Fé over the entire Chaco, and pushes on over the northern frontier to include the Paraguayan lands of similar nature. So far as Argentina is concerned, the centre that is wealthiest in the timber lies in the neighbourhood of Sabana, to the south-west of Resistencia. To the east of the Paraná—that is to say, upon the western bank of the river—the tree is scarce, although a few minor and unimportant quebracho districts exist.

Until the high quality and percentage of the tannin extracted from quebracho timber was realised, the exceptionally hard wood of the trees was wont to be utilised only for the purposes of railway sleepers, posts, and the like. Of late years, however, the shipment of the logs has remained practically at a standstill, since not more than a certain proportion of the timber can be spared for that purpose, while that of the extract, on the other hand, has gone ahead by leaps and bounds.

In order to illustrate the tremendous development of the trade it is necessary to refer to the commercial statistics rendered by the government. Thus, while in 1898 188,260 tons of logs and 1192 tons of extract were sent out from the country, the corresponding amounts of exportation in 1908 were 254,571 tons of logs, and no less than 48,161

tons of the profitable extract. The commerce, moreover, continues to increase in at least the same ratio as before.

The largest quebracho company in existence is the 'Forestal,' a gigantic concern that owns some two hundred and forty-three leagues of forest land, besides leasing others that bring up its field of operations to over two million acres in English measure. In addition to this it possesses one hundred and eighty miles of railway, four extract factories, sawmills, enormous lighters and tugs, ports and wharves, and, amongst innumerable other assets of the kind, twenty-six thousand head of cattle. The human population of the company's territories amounts, I believe, to no less than eight thousand souls. Thus the magnitude of the Forestal undertaking is sufficiently obvious.

Another tree that, although the general area of its growth is far more widespread than that of the quebracho, flourishes especially in these northern districts, is the algarrobo. The algarrobo is undoubtedly an all-round tree. It renders up timber, fodder, and alcohol with indiscriminate generosity. As timber it is most valuable for purposes for which a hard and durable material is necessary, and it adapts itself most admirably to street paving. I believe that the Pantheon Square in Rome is paved with this wood, as the result of a gift from the municipality of Buenos Aires.

The algarrobo produces in its season a harvest

of long beans, the fruit of which, when it falls to the ground, constitutes excellent fodder for grazing animals, who occasionally pluck the pods from the branches themselves. A liquid, too, is distilled from this same fruit by the Indians that is peculiarly popular, and that plays no little part in native life. The method by which the beverage is made to ferment is not altogether a pleasant one, assisted as it is by expectoration and human saliva. But it is all one to the simple dusky folk so long as the entrancing liquid with its intoxicant qualities be brought successfully to light. The season of the algarrobo vintage comes as a general and prolonged *fiesta* to the Indians, and all idea of work is put aside for weeks until the last drop is swallowed, and the final headache is a thing of mere pleasant memory.

Chaco water, it should be said, is generally suitable enough for drinking purposes, although in parts its salty properties render it impossible for the purpose. In such districts a plant that is of great service to the traveller is the *caraguatá*. This retains fresh water almost continuously in the cups of its leaves that serves admirably as a beverage.

Although so great an extent of the Chaco is forest land and swamp, many of the intervening stretches afford really good pasture, and the estancia industry is productive of amazingly good results for such northern latitudes. Maize, in addition, consents to flourish in no mean degree, and the

quality of the local tobacco, although its growth has been somewhat neglected, is excellent.

In the majority of its physical features the Chaco stands quite apart from any other district in Argentina. Indeed, its soil offers many distinctly curious phenomena. It has something in common with the earth of the central plains in that neither can lay claim to a single pebble or stone within its area. But there all resemblance ceases. The soil of the Andes, swept down throughout the ages across the great plain with its just perceptible incline, has been ground to a consistency that almost resembles that of cement.

The results are frequently curious. Thus, water, having once sunk down to the limits of the top layers of vegetable earth, can penetrate no further. It is for this reason that flood waters, when once abroad, spread so widely across the land, and owe their eventual disappearance to the force of evaporation alone. A traveller of old-standing in the Chaco can never be positively certain whether his return to familiar haunts will reveal to him dry land or a scene of water from which the tree trunks emerge from one horizon to another. It is for this reason, too, that a cellar beneath a house will remain perfectly dry, when the surface of the ground above is covered with water to the extent of some inches.

The curious nature of the soil is instanced again by the passage of a number of bullock carts through one of these intermittent swamps—practically all

A NORTHERN 'CAMP' CART

MESSRS. FREUND AND DUFFIELD:
TWO WELL-KNOWN NORTHERN PIONEERS

the heavy traffic of the Chaco is effected by means of bullock carts. The first half-dozen of a lengthy procession of these wagons will pass through one of these places, their wheels perfectly free from any suspicion of mud or of stickiness of any kind. With the transit of a greater number, however, the surface of the earth begins to churn up into a substance of the density of butter—a mere imitation of mud that hardens again on the instant that it becomes dry.

When occupied with the peculiarities of the Chaco the strange fish of the district leap irresistibly to mind, although, since we are not yet dealing with the fauna, the reference may be a little out of place. If so, it is appropriate enough in one sense, since the fish themselves are frequently out of place! Of the smaller finny creatures that come down in the rainstorms I have already made casual mention in my last book. Nothing remains to be added to the bald statement of their existence except that they are authentic and solid creatures known in other parts of the world as well as here.

Concerning the larger fish, however, that come to life with the filling of the ponds by the rain, and that disappear with the evaporation of the waters, there is more to be said. The creatures vary from one to two feet in length, and have somewhat the appearance of a short, stout eel. They possess, however, the additional advantage—if it constitute one—of rudimentary hind legs.

That they lie dormant in the soil during the dry season has been firmly established, but the means by which they achieve this extraordinary feat has been by no means made clear. A very plausible theory was expounded some while ago to the effect that these fish were provided with an alternative means of respiration—through lungs when in the earth, and through gills when in the water. Appendages are certainly visible during their periods of aquatic life that have no existence in their dormant spells. But now, I believe, an authority from Prague denies the existence of these convenient and satisfactory gills, holding the objects to be merely organs of propagation worn for the occasion, and asserting that the breathing method is uniform throughout. Thus the secret of this queer fish's existence seems to be wrapped in as deep a mystery as ever.

To desert the topic of animal life for a while, the question of the exploration of the remoter Chaco still remains a fascinating one. Much of the interior continues entirely unknown, and even the course and ramifications of the Pilcomayo river itself have only quite recently been traced with any degree of precision. Some years ago an expedition under Messrs. Olaf Storm and F. Freund, exploring the river from the west, was brought to a halt by the waters of a great swamp into which the river unexpectedly resolved itself. The waters proving too shallow for further navigation of any kind, the

party, after many endeavours and the suffering of innumerable hardships, was forced to return.

A later expedition made the important discovery that a previously little-known river, that was given the name of the Confuso, branched off from the Pilcomayo in the neighbourhood of longitude 60°, and, running north of the other stream, was navigable at intervals to the point where it joined the Paraguay at Villa Hayes, midway between Asuncion and Concepcion.

This new river was held, in fact, to be the true Pilcomayo, and its discovery gave rise to a certain amount of political confusion that went to justify its name. Indeed, the bringing to light of the swampy Confuso raked up an important historical question. At the conclusion of the Paraguayan War the United States, accepting the office of arbitrator, had awarded to Argentina the whole of the Chaco as far north as the Pilcomayo river. On the discovery of the Confuso, therefore, Argentina, with considerable reason alleging that stream to be the true Pilcomayo, laid claim to the strip of territory between the two rivers. As, however, the award had decreed the Argentine-Paraguayan frontier to lie along the Pilcomayo *that gave into the Paraguay opposite Asuncion*, the joint committee of the two Republics appointed to deal with the matter agreed that the southern branch of the river must continue to divide the two countries.

During the past four years the Messrs. Adalberto

and Arnold Schmied have effected much admirable work of exploration in this little-known frontier region, and I am indebted to these gentlemen for various photographs secured while on their expeditions. In the course of these travels much excellent pasture land was revealed. A tribe of Indians, the Macás, moreover, were lit upon for the first time.

Keeping rigidly within their own boundaries, as is the custom of these small communities, the variety of languages that abound in this part of the world is amazing. The Toba Indians, for instance, who accompanied the expedition, could make nothing of the Macá speech. Nevertheless the important Toba country, extending as far north as the Pilcomayo, approaches closely enough to the banks of the Confuso where the smaller community dwells.

The Macás, primitive and unsophisticated to a degree, at first underwent the ordeal of photography with reluctance and visible terror. Yet, notwithstanding the complete isolation of their present state, there must have been a time when the tribesmen enjoyed a certain intercourse with the outer world. Of this their possessions afford an undeniable proof. They own good horses, and fat herds of exceptionally fine-looking cattle. The girdle, moreover, that constitutes the sole garment of the race, is frequently to be found decorated with old Spanish silver pieces! The history of these lost tribesmen might well

A WINTER SCENE

CARTING IN MISIONES

prove an interesting one, could it ever be unravelled from the mysteries of forest and swamp amidst which it was enacted.

There are, of course, many wild creatures abounding in the Chaco that are unknown in the more southern provinces. The monkey, wild pig, ant-eating bear, giant fox, wild cat, and many species of deer are among the characteristic animals that thrive in the territory. The tapir, moreover, is fairly frequently to be met with. This latter stout, heavy, and horse-like creature seems occasionally to be addicted to the most peculiar and erratic actions.

Mr. F. Freund (one of the actual pioneers of the Chaco, to whose kindness as well as to that of Mr. E. A. Duffield I am indebted for much of the information on the remoter districts) experienced, for one, a rather striking example of these idiosyncrasies. In the course of one of his expeditions the small party had settled itself for the night in the midst of the forest. In accordance with the usual precautions against a possible attack on the part of reptiles, or of larger beasts, the men were disposed in hammocks slung from tree to tree in the neighbourhood of a blazing watch fire. In the middle of the night they were rudely disturbed by the furious advent of a tapir, who came up at full speed through the gloom, charged the fire in a frenzy, and pranced about for a while kicking at the embers. After a few moments he departed as unceremoniously

as he had arrived, leaving the nerves of the party not a little shaken by this tumultuous apparition.

The jaguar and puma, although of course not entirely confined to the Chaco, are peculiarly abundant in the province, as indeed are many other animals, such as the carpincho, that have practically disappeared from the more populous neighbourhoods. The crocodile that haunts the rivers in great numbers is a short, squat, dark specimen of the saurian family, of habits that are no more gentle than those of the tribe elsewhere. He possesses a certain merit, however, in that his tail—stewed, or baked, or boiled—is esteemed a great delicacy by many.

The boa constrictor attains a considerable size in the Chaco, and he has many smaller brethren for company, including the dreaded rattlesnake. But there is no space here for a detailed catalogue of the immense variety of northern life. From tiny scorpions to huge strident-voiced frogs; from toucans, parrots, and cardinal birds to flamingoes and swans—the forest districts are provided with all the wealth and colour of existence that fit the latitude.

It should afford no little comfort to prospective settlers that, with the clearing of the forest and the taming of the land, the majority of the more pestilential creatures—including the three species of mosquito, from the giant *tigre* to the minute *polverino*—unfold their legs or wings and depart, leaving the new lands to a less ruffled order of mankind.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ACROSS THE ANDES

From Atlantic to Pacific—Aspects of the Land of Peaks—Overwhelming Landscape—The Journey as it was—The Passage of the Cumbre—Various Types of Travellers—Mental Effects of Mountaineering—Mules and their Quality—An Andes Sketch—The Complete Traveller.

THE route from the yellow La Plata to the blue Pacific has been altered only as regards a score or so out of the nine hundred miles of which it is composed. The results of the great tunnel and the few cuttings in the heart of the Andes may seem of little account to one unacquainted with that stupendous mountain range, yet in reality the innovations change completely the ethics of the journey.

The first portion of the route is the same as ever, it is true. As before, the train rolls demurely across the pastures, and the wheat, maize, linseed, and alfalfa of the plains, as far as Mendoza with its vineyards and orchards. Thence to the foothills of the great range, with the brown Mendoza river tumbling and foaming beside the train amidst a land whose boulders and cliffs grow in size in proportion as the timorous vegetation dies away and

disappears. Then into a realm where the rock, soaring now in tremendous peaks towards the sky, breaks out into a brilliant and unexpected colouring of its own. Black, red, orange, mauve, pink, green, violet—there is scarcely a tint that is not boldly painted upon the enormous confusion of facets, while the pure white of the topmost snow peaks hangs tremulously above. Well past the famous natural bridge, the Puente del Inca, the solitary stations crouch, lonely and infinitesimal specks clinging to the mighty terraces that bear no other tokens of humanity except the rails themselves, and the few stray crosses that each mark the death place of a human being. Then by the jagged peaks, chasms, and mountain torrents to Las Cuevas and the snows—until this point the old order of affairs has obtained. It is here that the great innovation begins.

In the old days—the chronological gap between ancient and modern may just as legitimately be counted by weeks as by years—the rails ended at this valley of Las Cuevas. The halt was definite, and was marked by a bundling out from the train, and a night spent some ten thousand feet above the normal haunts of mankind ere the mules came round in the morning to bear the traveller over the yet loftier pass of the Cumbre itself, where extends the line of frontier posts and where rises the colossal statue of Christ.

Now, the traveller, undisturbed, keeps his seat

ANDINE SCENERY

in the railway carriage, and the train rumbles on, plunges into the depths of the great tunnel, emerges on to the cuttings upon the Chilian side, and rolls downwards sedately to the shores of the Pacific.

The result is far-reaching, so far as the passenger is concerned. The journey has been shorn of its adventurous and pioneering element. The future traveller will lose a variety of sensations, to say nothing of the chance of those genial reminiscences and episodes that are most safely given out in the neighbourhood of an English fireside. Where, for instance, is the corrugated iron hotel that sat up in the mountain heights, and to which the knowing travellers raced in haste in order to secure the first pick of the beds packed so liberally in each room? The tin hostelry is still there without a doubt; but the meetings of folk in the living-room, the rambles through the neighbouring wilds, and the vociferous disputes between the *patron* and the conductor of the train when the latter had omitted to bring up the bread or some other commodity that was to serve for the entire company—these will be no more!

Amidst the jumble of reminiscences the fall of evening, too, is one that deserves a special shelf. An hour of anecdote, this, when the wayfarers gathered outside to watch the sinking of the sun, the great shadows rising steadily upwards on the sides of the towering peaks, and the shafts of dying light that struck their mystic barbs clear across the profound valley. Sunk, as it were, at the bottom of

that vast well of stone whose dark sides rose up to soar in tremendous menace above, it was an hour of romance. After the first awed silence, the effect of the surroundings was to loosen the tongue. There were some old stagers who had done the trip before. Even they were pervaded by the glamour of the moment, and were wont to unbend and to speak. There were few of them who had not shot a condor!

But it was with the morning light that came the real series of adventure, when to the sound of jingling bells the company of mules came lightly thudding round. The procedure was almost invariably the same. Although as a rule few of the party were 'camp' men, the company had been expert riders to a man on the previous night. The sight of the soaring track in the cold morning light was productive of caution and guile. There was a drawing aside of guides, whispered confabulations, and the transfer of a note or two expended in return for the 'best and quietest mule.' It was perhaps partly on account of this that an extraordinary phenomenon came about with regard to the comparison of these animals. The mules were good in any case; but it was remarkable how many of them were the best! There were times when out of a number of fifty each single animal was guaranteed superior to the rest! Which proves that in the matter of quality that particular troop would be difficult to beat.

Once started, too, and fairly on the way, surely

AN ANDINE CUTTING

no more varied study of the human expression was possible than that afforded by the riders over the Cumbre. The man who was experiencing genuine enjoyment; the other who rather thought he was, but remained uncertain on the point; the third who was frankly and pessimistically doubtful, and the fourth whose brimming confidence at the start vanished with unheroic abruptness at the first clamberings and divings of his mule at the steep places—the ghosts of all these must haunt the Cordilleras as surely as those of the old-time *conquistadores* who crossed the range in deep earnest and in real danger! For the pass of history and traditions will be all but deserted, and the raised arm of the gigantic Christ on the summit of the pass will bless a greater loneliness.

Indeed, the journeys across the Andes were productive of no little comradeship. In the course of the minor adventures of the trip individuality asserted itself. There was just sufficient of the element of pioneering on a well-beaten track to make or destroy reputations. Of the queer personalities involved one at least remains firmly impressed on my mind.

He was conspicuous among the group that lined the departure platform of the Retiro Station in Buenos Aires. His bright yellow riding-breeches and patent-leather boots shone in gay contrast to the more sombrely clothed understandings of the remaining travellers. The bustle upon the platform

was considerable, for the train that rested by its side was about to speed off on the first stage of the transcontinental journey to the Pacific shore. But wherever the yellow riding-breeches twinkled the atmosphere became charged with an almost electric energy. The owner of the garments, unhampered by leave-taking friends, was flitting from group to group, bestowing a passing phrase of advice here and of caution there. Obviously a person of experience, he was prodigal of the commodity. His hints concerning the welfare of luggage and the wisest procedure in general were sufficiently authoritative to annihilate gratitude in some instances. Nevertheless, undismayed by the most patent lack of response, he persevered in his guardian-angelship with undiminished fervour. He was evidently a man born to lead; if none followed him that was their affair, and no fault of his.

It was not until the train was well upon its way, thundering over the plain amid the rolling clouds of summer dust, that a personal note was struck. In the narrow confines of the corridor carriages the ubiquity of the man in patent-leather riding-boots was more marked than before; his interest in his fellow-passengers, moreover, continued unabated. In order to prove that his questioning was no one-sided affair, he freely unveiled his own personality. Claiming the broad county of Yorkshire for his birthplace, he modestly deprecated his Yankee twang, alleging a prolonged residence in the States as apology for the

STATUE OF CHRIST ON THE CUMBRE

infirmity. In spite of the explanation, however, it was necessary to take the alleged defect for granted, so smothered was it beneath an accent and idiom both unmistakeably foreign. His pointed black beard and upturned moustache, too, adorned a countenance of a southern type more common upon the Mediterranean shore than in Yorkshire.

The next morning the narrow-gauge train had climbed into the heart of the Andes. It came to a halt at length, not from want of willingness, but from lack of further rail. By the side of the railroad were waiting the mules—mules of every size and various colours—that were to climb from Argentina to Chile. The moment for the riding-boots and breeches had come ; to none was the fact more patent than to their owner. Singling out a mule whose coat was glossier than the rest, he led it forward to a conspicuous place, and bestowed upon it a scrutiny of an exhaustiveness that would have shamed many a vet., and charmed a meteoric racehorse. Having mounted, he paced the animal to and fro in great earnestness for a while ere he returned to the midst of his fellow-travellers. He knew of a short cut, he explained, a way that provided more fascination and adventure than the beaten track of the guides. He had been there before, he promised, and would lead all who followed him into perfect safety. His eloquence, though it left the main body cold, detached a couple of roving spirits from their number. The trio set off

immediately, followed an hour or so later by the rest in a speculative mood.

A few hours in the saddle saw the travellers within hail of the hotel upon the Chilian slope. The pass was done with; nothing remained but to discover the fate of the others. The matter was not long delayed. There, as large as life in front of the hotel, shone the boots and yellow riding-breeches of the enthusiast, while upon either hand stood one of his co-adventurers. The moment undoubtedly afforded his triumph. Had he remained mute, the gracious memory might have been his for ever. But, unluckily, he went off for a while in company with the landlord. A little later he returned, cantering briskly upon a private mule whose stirrups and bridle were thickly encrusted with silver. To and fro he sped, waving his hat the while. Then, forsaking altogether the small plateau in front of the hotel, he careered boldly along the more remote track that, cut in the side of a precipice, followed its curves.

As luck would have it, another rider, a Chilian, was approaching from the other side of the chief bend. It was evident to those at the hotel that the two, as yet invisible to each other, must meet at the angle. In another moment the expected had actually occurred. Both mules stopped dead in their tracks, nose all but touching nose. But the figure in yellow riding-breeches had continued its motion a little further through the air, and was now upon the ground.

THE VALLEY OF LAS CUEVAS

When the traveller returned, with lagging feet that paced slowly beside his lightened mule, it was as another man. He had set out, a hardened adventurer, daring the mighty Andes and his mule as well. He came back, to use his own words, broken in mind and body, craving so clamorously for sympathy that in the end he obtained it. Once within the Chilian railway carriage, he composed himself to rest with a weary sigh. Yet the next day, resuscitated in form and spirit, he was bustling amid the Valparaisan hotels. Instead of sympathy, it was accident insurance subscriptions of which he was in search. He was a canvasser by profession, he explained.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE PASSAGE OF THE PARANÁ

Some Characteristics of Entre Rios—Past Isolation of the Province—The *Entreriano*—His Temperament—Mythical and Actual—The Present Link with Buenos Aires—The Introduction of the Ferry-boats—Trains as Passengers—The Route along the River—Scene at Night—Dining under Amphibious Conditions—Ibicuy—The Resumption of Wheeled Progress—The 'Camp' at Dawn—An Early Drive across the Pastures.

THE province of Entre Rios differs widely from that of Buenos Aires that borders it to the south. Although it can lay no claim to any eminence of real importance, its undulations, when contrasted with the utter level of the southern and western plains, are by comparison marked and distinctive. The main features, however, of Entre Rios—the 'Province between Rivers'—are its waterways. With the Paraná once crossed from the south-west, the streamless country has given way to a land that, with the countless ramifications of the Paraná, Uruguay, and Gualeguay, holds a network of watery thoroughfares so complicated that a navigator ignorant of local geography must undoubtedly be lost in the confused maze of streams, islands, and genuine banks.

As a pastoral and agricultural province Entre Rios is at least as richly endowed as its neighbours. Nourished not only by its streams, but by the periodical rains that carve irregular water-courses across the land, the natural grasses, the alfalfa, and cereals sprout with an abundance that is exceptional even for the fertile republic. As a set-off to this the crops are held by some to stand a little more at the mercy of locusts and other pests than those of the more southern provinces. Nevertheless, as is explained elsewhere, it is possible to place too much emphasis upon the locust. It is seldom that the creature's reputation for trouble does not far exceed the real, and frequently tragic, damage that it causes.

The *Entreriano* of the past—or, rather, that large section of children of nature that go to form the gaucho community—has suffered from a reputation as sinister in its way as that of the locust. The *Entreriano* is supposed to have stalked his uplands and marshes with fingers perpetually itching upon the handle of his knife. That the history of the Province of Rivers is a violent one not even its most patriotic inhabitant can deny. Yet those who have followed as far as possible the sanguinary trail of knife and bullet as it worked its way out from mere legendry to a comparatively recent date claim for the *Entreriano* that his character for ferocity is due rather to the force of circumstances than that of temperament. As to the present-day

specimen of the race, his employers, both Argentine and British, are enthusiastic in his praise, declaring that for loyalty, trustworthiness, and good service he has few equals in the land.

The fact that a certain amount of jealousy exists between the various provinces is both a natural and a healthy symptom. In the consequent warfare of comparisons the *Entreriano* has suffered a little from the simple reason of his remoteness. The many streams of the Paraná have formed a barrier to shut him off from the intimacy and understanding of his compatriot neighbours, while the Uruguay has completed his isolation to the east. Thus the *Entreriano* of the past has afforded to the popular mind a mysterious and rather incomprehensible picture that had in its composition numerous lurid splashes that stood for outlawry and bloodshed.

History in Argentina is moving apace just now. The linking by means of railway of the Atlantic and Pacific has been greeted with a just amount of enthusiasm. Yet another feat, as meritorious in a lesser way, has not received a tithe of the notice it deserves. The union of Entre Rios with the remainder of the Republic was effected in 1908. By means of great steam ferry-boats that nurse complete trains upon their decks, and that proceed majestically some sixty miles up the Paraná, the traveller may now take his seat in the train at Buenos Aires, and need not emerge from the

compartment until he has arrived at his destination in the great island surrounded by the broad rivers.

The benefits that the province has derived from this new line of communication are, of course, considerable. With Buenos Aires and its markets brought within such easy reach, the values of both land and stock have already risen to an appreciable degree. Indeed, with rather dramatic suddenness the *Entreriano* has found himself drawn inwards from the fringe towards the vortex itself of Argentine affairs. And, after a few natural and preliminary rubbings of the eye, he is adapting himself with enthusiasm to the new situation.

This momentous passage of the ferry-boat, reflecting as it does infinite credit to the Entre Rios railway, is worthy of a detailed description. When the train has left the Chacarito station at Buenos Aires, and has rolled to the north-west across the plain with that easy motion that Argentine trains affect—a lazy, undulatory movement that, for some extraordinary reason, almost resembles the cantering of a horse—the new port of Zárate is reached, and the engine, pointing towards the waters of the Paraná, comes to a halt upon the white, sandy bank. The great ferry-boat is in waiting, firmly moored to a jetty whose palisades project on either side into the water, exactly fitting the blunt end of the steamer, and thus rendering impossible any slip or sideways movement on her part. Beneath is the broad space, lined with metals, that is destined to receive the

train; above is a spacious stretch of promenade deck, from which the tall, black, oval funnels protrude to dominate the whole.

In the meanwhile the engine has forsaken the front of the train, and another is busily at work in the rear. The first portion of the train is driven down the angle of the bank on to the metals on board, that serve for the time being as elongations of the land lines. A series of retreats and advancings leaves the train in three parallel sections safely upon the deck of the ferry. A few minutes later the great craft with its freight of humanity and carriages has left the dock. With an utter silence and want of vibration that is difficult to associate with the ethics of steamers, she (the intermixture of boat and train need not necessarily deprive the former of sex) glides along the reaches of the Paraná.

From the merely spectacular point of view, it is perhaps a little reprehensible that the Entre Rios railway should have arranged the night-time for the river passage, whether coming or going. But, with the benefit of a moon, the effect of the transit is sufficiently interesting as it is. From the upper deck, the liberal surface of which is broken by no other erection than the wheelhouse, not only is revealed a bird's-eye view of the lines of carriages below, but the exact course of the vessel as it turns and twists in sympathy with the winding river may be followed as well. In and out of the islands, past

CATTLE DRINKING

the mouths of tributary streams, and the banks, covered with the interminable fringe of trees—the progress is eerily silent and mysterious. Now and again, with a glow of rival lights, a steamer passes, a real and unadulterated structure of the water this, whose inhabitants may very possibly view the amphibious vessel of horse marine tendencies with the easy contempt that is born of envy and non-understanding. Upon the shore solitary lights stand out at intervals, and, more rarely, the glare of the dried grasses burning at the water's edge, throwing out broad tongues of leaping flame over a surface of many dozens of acres.

Beneath, the lights of the train shine out strongly over the still waters. It is the dining hour, and the restaurant car is agog with its hungry passengers and busy waiters. From within this, looking out of the windows that give upon the water, it is difficult to realise that the car is a thing set upon wheels, a passenger in itself, and not an integral part of the vessel's structure.

Thus the calm progress continues, for four hours and more, the travellers, in the accepted way of humanity, hovering all the while between the rival attractions of the upper deck and of the dining car, until a spread of lights, more brilliant than usual, stands out upon the bank ahead. A few minutes later the steam ferry is at rest at Ibicuy, her nose held in the close embrace of the jutting piles. The sections of the train become imbued with life once

more. Each rumbles from the deck, and mounts the incline, until the train, once more a composite whole, waits upon the Entre Rios shore in readiness for its further journey.

Then across Entre Rios by night, through a country so freshly scarred by the railway metals that it is only now becoming accustomed to the stirring prick of the new era. Past stations where cattle trains wait on sidings, the long wagons resounding to the continuous thunder of the hoofs as the animals, distracted by the whistling and noisy advent of the mail, surge tumultuously to and fro within the confined area of their travelling prisons; past wayside halts, dark, deserted, and passengerless for the time being, until the station looms out of the night that marks the end of the journey—so far as we are at present concerned. Out, bag and baggage, by the side of the track, with the dim outline of a 'camp' coach showing out in the background through the darkness. It is the hour before the dawn when the loss of the comfortable, well-lit train cabin, with its well-upholstered bunks and seats, makes itself felt with a sudden keenness. But that is only for the interval that elapses before the coach is entered. Once within the vehicle, the familiar atmosphere of the *campo* is absorbing to the exclusion of all else. The horses are cantering over the soft earth with an exhilarating thudding of hoofs; the harness leather is creaking to a jovial tune, and the jolting of the

carriage itself is as exhilarating in its way as the action of a mettlesome horse.

The horizon has grown lighter; the fence lines have sprung into being, their posts and wires hardening into solid lines with the approach of dawn. The owls, in futile rage at the sight of an intruder at such an hour, rise up one after the other from the posts and from the earth, to hover fluttering above the coach and to confound themselves in a paroxysm of screams and owlish abuse. The plovers, for their part, second these efforts with a heartiness that leaves nothing to be desired.

To the right is a *puesto* set amidst a group of trees. From one of its windows a light is shining—a light that is rapidly growing dimmer with the coming of day. There are figures of men on foot, passing here and there. Others, mounted, come galloping through the dusk at the heels of a troop of horses that are bundled in, willy-nilly, in preparation for the work that is before them. And then, the sun has jumped up from the horizon; the cattle and sheep are stirring in earnest in all directions. The coach is still rolling on, much as it did before, but with this difference—that it has left the night behind it, and is passing through the first flush and warmth of a 'camp' day.

CHAPTER XXX

AN ENTRE RIOS ESTANCIA

Las Cabezas—Area of the Estate—Cattle and Sheep Carried—A Noted Estancia—Spring in Entre Rios—Some Pleasant Features—A Drive through the *Campo*—Scenes upon the Road—A Youthful Horseman—The Heron and Teru-Tero—The Crosses of the *Campo*—An Iguana and its Fate—An Unusual Country-side Object—*Tacamares*—The Deepening of the Pools—A Wild Scene—Bird Life in the Neighbourhood of the *Tacamares*.

UNDOUBTEDLY one of the most noted estancias in Entre Rios is that of Las Cabezas. With its half-dozen leagues, situated at San Julian in the southern centre of the province, it is an estate of which the district has every right to be as proud as it is.

In considering Las Cabezas it is impossible to dissociate the ethics of utility from those of the aesthetic. By the employment of a happy medium here the two have been made to serve a common end. Thus, the long avenues and groves of Paraiso trees serve not only as shelter for the live-stock, but as very effective ornamentation, and the stretches of water that have been caught up from the rain streams and dammed into continuous existence are picturesque as well as indispensable in the way of watering

places. Indeed, there is no reason why the tennis and croquet-grounds that are about the very handsome homestead should not come within the same double category, since recreation is as necessary in its way as work.

The census of the estancia is on a par with that of other undertakings of similar magnitude. In 1909 it comprised 19,408 cattle; 47,262 sheep; 3099 horses; 533 mules, asses, pigs, and various odd species; while the resident human population amounts to 273. The cattle, by the way, are for the most part Hereford, since Mr. Henry Darbyshire, in whose charge the estate is, holds the breed to be hardier and more fitting to the district than the shorthorn; the sheep are Romney Marsh.

Having thus considered the crude figures and statistics of the estancia, it is high time to deal with its more salient and picturesque aspects. Set in a lightly rolling country that is watered by a true river, the Clé, as distinguished from the ephemeral rain streams that periodically help to nourish the land, the appearance of the rich pastures is exceptionally grateful to the eye, while in their season the crops of maize and linseed bear ample testimony to the fertility of the soil. In the centre of the seemingly endless stretches of pasture, the home paddocks are lined by the Paraiso-tree groves of which I have already spoken, and the main avenues in the neighbourhood of the house are bordered by the tree as well. The scale on which these trees

are cultivated will be realised when it is explained that from ten to fifteen thousand are planted each year. Here, in the centre, are the stud herds of the Hereford cattle, amazingly handsome 'points' of the imported red-and-white animals, and here, too, the proudest of the Romney Marsh rams feed in all the glory of their white fleece.

The house itself, as is usual with such buildings, stands in the centre of its own particular *monte*. A certain number of English trees, such as the oak and beech, have been introduced here; but they have proved a little disappointing as regards their growth. Near by is one special home paddock of sufficiently excellent turf to enable it to serve as a cricket-field at times, since, Las Cabezas being the model estancia in Entre Rios, it is bound to take the lead in the lighter aspects of the life as well.

There are few pleasanter seasons than an Entre Rios spring, and there is certainly no pleasanter spot over which to drive or ride than the country which owns allegiance to Las Cabezas. Starting out in the early morning, when the various notes of the birds are sounding from the plantations, through the gates on to the springy turf, the aspect of the country is wonderfully verdant and pleasing. So far as the eye can reach the pastures are dotted with sheep and red-and-white cattle, while here and there are companies of horses, since the place is famed for the Yorkshire coach-horse breed.

These, and the *peones* that ride busily to and

fro, are the chief outward and visible signs of the pastoral industry of the place. There is much, however, that, although of minor interest, is worthy of note. The grass, for instance, is covered with an astonishing multitude of mushrooms. For mile after mile the collections of snowy white domes peer upwards, in many places sufficiently numerous to fleck the landscape with a marked tinge of white, modified in places by the clumps of pale mauve triangular-leaved orchis, as well as by a very pretty rose-coloured flower of the anemone tribe. Were there a market here for mushrooms, it is conceivable that they could be gathered by the ton—if the thought of a ton weight of the feathery-light things does not surpass the imagination. As no such demand exists, a few basketfuls pulled up for the use of the house is the limit of the raids upon these gigantic fields. The consequent inevitable waste of these hundreds of thousands of the prized fungus suffices to rend the heart of a mushroom-lover.

To the front now is a *puesto*, the small house with its outbuildings that serves as one of the strategic points of the industry of the estate, and that lodges a *capataz*, or some such minor official, and his family. From the group of Paraiso trees that shelters the dwelling the scent of the dim lilac blossom is wafted strongly for hundreds of yards. Within the precincts the man is waving his sombrero in hearty greeting, a couple of tiny children at his

side striking up a cloud of dust with their bare feet as they romp.

Then out upon one of the broad main roads that intersect the place, the gaucho aide-de-camp who rides in tireless attendance upon the carriage spurring forward to open the paddock gate. The broad green borders through which the practicable part of the highway winds are densely overgrown to the height of six feet and more with sorrel, the white tops of which run in an apparently solid layer across the background. The *flor morada* is out in blossom too, the flower that is most abundant and most characteristic of spring throughout the country. Standing a foot or so above the ground, its purple clumps stretch far and wide, staining acre upon acre of the land with its soft yet brilliant hue. The *flor morada* is of material, as well as of ornamental, benefit, since it affords excellent pasture for cattle and sheep, who champ down the delicate blossoms with no compunction concerning the mere artistic ethics of their food.

A boy is approaching along the road mounted upon a horse, a shrimp of some seven or eight years astride of a great upstanding fifteen-two hand animal. Astride is, perhaps, scarcely the right word in this instance, since the child's small legs are splayed on the top of the horse rather than about it. But having once gained his perch, he is in little danger of losing it. With the easy confidence that betokens an absolute unconsciousness of any

PEDIGREE CATTLE

EWES AND LAMBS AT LAS CABEZAS

feat in particular, he swings up at a canter, stares with grave interest at the carriage, salutes with dignified simplicity, and is gone—a mite of humanity upon an equine mountain. A gaucho in the making, only so far as stature is concerned! In gaucho lore and gaucho equine gait he is made already.

All about is the gentle rolling country that distinguishes Entre Rios from the camps of central Buenos Aires. In a hollow close by, where the ranker grass sprouts from the marshy surface, some dozens of herons are standing to attention, long necked and rather incurious sentinels. The crested plover, the teru-tero, are, as usual, everywhere; but a little farther along the road a couple of the birds are gyrating so wildly in the air and screaming such shrill defiance at the approaching carriage that it is obvious that something very special is amiss. At the halt of the vehicle their antics redouble, while one, descending suddenly, crawls slowly away trailing a wing—an immoral bird, since it is acting a lie! And that, worst of all, in vain! In view of the fact that it was openly soaring through the atmosphere a few seconds before, the malingering is patent. As a diplomatist, the bird has failed.

Approaching on foot, the cause of the creatures' uproar—that has defeated its own ends—becomes apparent. In the centre of a small mud patch by the side of the road are two very small, round, fluffy objects, destined in good time to scream and flutter as wildly as their parents do now. This

near approach has flung the pair of seniors into a pitch of ungovernable excitement. Making straight for the face of the hated human being, they only turn with a mad convulsion of wings and body and the most furious screech of all when within a yard of the object of their wrath. The procedure, repeated several times, is quite giddy in its effects. Even the ultimate departure of the carriage serves only in part to allay the uproar on the part of these most hysterical of all birds. After the passage of a mile and more they can still be seen circling about the tiny bodies of their youngsters, who have remained placid throughout in the justly confiding innocence of youth.

Swerving off from the main road through another set of gates, the horses are following the open track through the paddocks once more. To the left, a wooden cross, solitary and sombre, projects from the soil. Its mute significance is pregnant to a degree. The *campo* is heavily strewn with such crosses, and to one imbued with the lore of the plains the first suggestion they bear is that of murder. It is for that reason that the unexpected appearance of one of these sacred emblems strikes with a certain dramatic shock. Nevertheless, in these days the blood-thirsty theory is seldom justified by fact. In the times when knife slashes accompanied each dispute, and when disputes were as frequent as political differences and the whims of human nature, the interpretation might have been taken for granted.

Now there is room for genuine accidents and for natural deaths. Certainly no dispute marks the site of this particular cross, unless it was with heaven. For where it stands a man fell in a charred heap, struck by lightning.

An iguana has darted out from a clump of thistle, and, after an instant's startled stare at the vehicle, makes off at a gallop over the open country. Alas for his fate! He is a fine specimen of his race, and an offer of his skin on the part of the estanciero is accepted with grateful thanks in advance. So the horses break into a gallop too; the carriage lurches and swings; the gaucho outrider comes up from the rear hand over fist, and—in the words of the Yankee—the whole outfit gallops after the galloping iguana. For a few hundred yards the long body of the fleeing giant lizard holds its own. Then, with the beating hoofs and rumbling wheels gaining rapidly upon his track, he caves in all at once and lies flat upon the ground, utterly spent, to meet his end at the butt of the driving-whip. When the vehicle proceeds on its way once more his three feet of body are safely inside.

The pasture land has become broken into now by broad stretches of maize and linseed. In the centre is the mud house of the colonist family to whom the cultivated land has been rented. They are natives of the soil, old acquaintances, possessed with a power for labour that is intense. Indeed, their achievements during this particular season are well

worthy of note, since they cannot have been much excelled in any part of the world. During the course of five and a half months four men, working four ploughs, have in the first instance tilled one hundred and thirty 'squares' of land, an amount that equals rather more than five-sixths of a square mile. That completed, they have sown two-thirds of the prepared land with linseed and the remaining third with maize, all within this same five and a half months! It must be admitted that the soil lends itself admirably to manipulation; but that four men alone should handle all but a square mile and cause it to be covered with its harvests—that, as a matter of fact, were just then flourishing and on the eve of ripening—is surely an affair that constitutes no everyday feat.

In the neighbourhood is a spectacle that is certainly uncommon, if not unique, in the panorama of the genuine rural *campo*. At a spot where four roads meet a tall signpost rears itself, with the localities to which the various highways lead clearly painted upon its arms. A daring innovation, erected in a semi-humorous spirit by the authorities of the estancia, it is not without its occasional uses. No doubt, too, it tickles the lighter side of the gaucho's temperament, now that he has become reconciled to the once hated fence-lines that limit the road spaces in such arbitrary and unwelcome fashion.

Here and there about the hollows in the undulating land the birds are circling in numbers greater

than usual. The spots where they thus abound are characteristic of the country. The *tacamares*, pools of water collected and retained by means of dams, are a feature not only of Las Cabezas but of the neighbouring districts as well. From these deposits run pipes by means of which the drinking places of the cattle and stock in general are kept supplied with fresh water. The system is practical and ingenious in the extreme, and the work is frequently contrived on a very large scale.

It is the dredging of these *tacamares* that affords one of the most picturesque scenes to be met with in Entre Rios. When the time is considered ripe for the deepening of one of them, a large 'mob' of horses, some three or four hundred in number, is driven to the spot. Then, in relays of a hundred or so each, they are sent into the water. Urged ceaselessly round and round, they swim, flounder about, or plunge: but in any case stir up the mud from the bottom until the water becomes—to commit a bull—of an almost earthy consistency. The sluice gates are then opened; the mud and water rushes away, and, behold! the depth of the pond has been increased by some inches or feet as the case may be.

So much for the practical result—an end that is apt to be forgotten in the watching of the tremendously strenuous performance. In the first place the great majority of the horses employed for the purpose are utterly untamed, and the call of the

wild appeals irresistibly to the gaucho. The *peones*—naked but happy—have ridden in on their own horses to the enjoyable task of keeping well astir the practical and utilitarian pandemonium. At the start they have dashed into the water excited, but still retaining fair control over their emotions. But what phase of sanity in a gaucho could withstand the circumstances—the leaping, plunging horses, the beating of hoofs and thudding of bodies in the pond, the seething waters below, and the spray and splashings above! Delirious with the scene, the *peones* outrival the wildest of the horses. Leaping from the backs of one to another, from their own tried mounts to the frantic untamed creatures and back again in a reckless game of equine general post, they have entered with a vengeance into the spirit of the hour. And the knowledge that a single mistake, a slip in these springings from one horse to another, must mean certain death beneath the water and the hundreds of hoofs leaves them profoundly indifferent.

The wildness of the scene is occasionally accentuated even beyond this. There are times when the horses, driven utterly frantic, rebel *en masse*, and, sweeping away guardians, fence-lines, and all other obstacles like straw from their path, disappear in a thunderous procession in search of liberty in general and freedom from the half-dredged pool in particular. But such victories are merely temporary, and before long they will be back again

amidst all the turmoil and confusion that such dredgings involve.

Even in the seasons when peace reigns over the undisturbed waters, the *tacamares* are interesting enough spots, since they constitute the most favourite haunts of the many species of duck and wildfowl that abound in the 'camp,' as well as being the rendezvous of numerous other birds. Thus the spots render their contribution to the more ordinary forms of sport in addition to providing these turbulent scenes of excitement.

CHAPTER XXXI

THROUGH EASTERN PASTURES

The Manipulation of 'Camp' Roads—The Passage of the Thistles—Some Trials of Horseflesh—River and *Monte*—A Drive of Incident—Vegetation and Bird Life—The Nests of the Oven Bird—Some Swamp Flowers—El Albardôn—A Fine Estancia—The Opportunity of the Mosquito—Evening in the *Campo*—The Appearance of the Vizcacha—The gaucho Outrider—A Tireless Attendant—The Perfume of the Paraiso—A Pleasant Homestead—The Mascot of Las Cabezas—Henry Darbyshire—A Well-known Estanciero—His Experiences as a Pioneer—An Encounter with the Indians and its Result—The Contrast of the Past with the Present—A Personal Reference.

ONE of the frontier fence-lines of Las Cabezas has at length been reached, and the carriage has passed out from the home territory into the country beyond. The road is essentially a cross-country one now, its surface scored into grooves and hollows beneath the force of past torrential rainstorms. The driving is a matter for care now, since in parts the surface of the way is nothing beyond a collection of deep earthy cups down the slopes of which the wheels skid in a series of side-slips. In others, where a deep and narrow valley ruts the centre of the track, the wheels, accurately manœuvred, run

smoothly on the parallel eminences on either hand—until the contour of the road changes, and it is necessary to negotiate a series of abrupt ridges some two or three feet in height. But the equilibrium of a four-wheeled carriage is wonderful when put to the test. Though it sways to the right and then to the left in the manner of a ship rolling in a heavy swell, it invariably appears to conclude the giddy performances upon an even keel ere plunging into the minor abysses of the following portion of broken country.

Presently, however, the road loses its uncomfortable identity in the face of a great stretch of open land—as open, that is to say, as it can be beneath its dense covering of four-foot thistles. So close is this forest of thistles that a wingless beetle could make his way without much trouble from one heavy purple blossom to another almost across the entire expanse, except where a narrow winding trail enters timidly from the edge. But even this, after penetrating two or three hundred yards, gives up the attempt in despair, and dies away, smothered by the coarse green and purple.

An unpromising field for the horses! With their ears cocked in nervous unease, they start along the blind track in a fever of unpleasant anticipation, alternately pulling apart and bumping together as the first pricks of the merciless thistles strike upon their hide. Once at the end of the track a solid wall of thistle stands to the front. But there is

nothing for it. The road lies through that silent menace of countless pin-pricks.

In response to the strenuous urging, the horses go crashing into the midst of it. The next moment they are plunging and rearing in all the confused terror of a bathing lady in the midst of seashore breakers. Then in a frenzy of desire to be quit of the forest of relentless stings they attempt to bolt, while the carriage sways and lurches over the bumps and hollows of the ground that is hidden by its prickly covering. Until the clear ground is reached upon the farther side the progress is a fairly wild one, with the swishing mass of thistles that reaches up to the horses' shoulders bending back and leaping forward to smite again as though possessed of an unpleasantly intelligent and human vindictiveness.

Scarcely have the horses regained a portion of their equanimity when the steep earth banks of a river yawn across the track. There is a sheer downward dive of a couple of dozen feet, a splashing through the waters of the ford, and a great heaving and pulling up the farther slope that eventually lands the all-enduring vehicle upon the level ground. It is decidedly a drive of incident, this; for, only just beyond, the open country is hedged across by a spreading *monte*, and the regular track is lost in the innumerable network of ways that wind in maze-like fashion in and out of the trees.

This is no artificial *monte* that covers its few

dozen or scores of acres, but a great area of natural woodland that extends for many square miles. It abounds in particular with tala trees—that from a distance have rather the appearance of willows, but that are in reality thorny growths possessed of quite a different leaf—and with many species of mimosa. Mingled with this feathery and graceful vegetation, and with the foliage of the other trees, are clumps of elderberries that hold up their broad white circles of blossom in lavish profusion.

In a tala tree here and there is the great ragged structure of that carrion bird, the *carancho*, a grim medley of sticks and twigs that stands out as a staring blot upon the light foliage. Infinitely more numerous are the oven birds' nests. In the open *campo* these quaint domes of mud are usually associated with fence posts and other such artificial projections, upon the tops of which they repose. Indeed, ere starting out upon this particular expedition a nest has been secured, and replaced by the help of wire stays on the timber, since the feet of fledgling birds were seen struggling in the corridor that encircles the interior of the mud house and leads to the inner and protected sanctum. To digress yet further, a second nest that was secured, apparently deserted, was productive of rather a startling surprise. While it was being held, a full five minutes after its annexation, the mouth of the corridor broke into a sudden explosion of fluttering wings, and three young oven birds,

powerful on the wing and all but full-grown, sped out one after another from the inner recess where they had lain in concealment all the while.

Here, in the *monte*, the nests are contrived upon the branches, and the effect of the numerous groups of little domes, with their entrance slits, perched upon the limbs and in the forks of the timber, is not a little curious. Occasionally the branch selected for the site of the residence appears of a perilous slenderness, since the solidified mud of the nests frequently weighs five or six pounds. But the instinct of the born architect doubtless points out the limit of the timber's supporting power. There is nothing in the appearance itself of the *ornero* or oven bird, by the way, that is indicative of any peculiar tastes in the matter of nests, or in any other direction. In size and build it much resembles a dove. Its head and back are of a fawn colour that becomes paler at the breast, while a marked splash of chestnut-red adorns its tail feathers.

The carriage is ploughing its way now through patches of swampy ground enclosed by the trees, the black mud splashing up from the hoofs and wheels, and the small frogs leaping frenziedly aside in their attempts to avoid the rapid juggernaut. The flowers in the neighbourhood have altered their character to suit the nature of the soil. Delicate yellow irises with black centres, and small white and pink star-like blossoms mingle with pale lilac swamp flowers, and with some trumpet-shaped

blooms of pure white whose lowly bases start from the earth itself.

With the gaining of firm land once more the woodland is enlivened by groups of pedigree Hereford cattle that are grazing upon the pasture between the trees. For the land is part of another famous Entre Rios estancia, *El Albardón*, owned by the Señores Bracht, a great property of sixteen leagues in extent that takes a very just pride in its pedigree bulls and cows, and in its many thousands of less patrician cattle that roam over its vast extent of land. Indeed, the bulls in their lengthy row of stalls, and the special ' points ' of cows and heifers that are in evidence near the homestead itself, could scarcely be surpassed anywhere in the matter of quality—one more example of the rapid progress of Entre Rios that, until recently connected by railway with Buenos Aires and the centre, was held to be without the radius of civilisation to a certain degree, and to be possessed of a breed of cattle to match!

Returning in the late afternoon, there are fresh experiences in store, although the road is the same. The passage of the wooded swamps, for instance, is more exciting than upon the outward route—less pleasant, moreover, since the mosquitoes, encouraged by the lowliness of the sun, have come out in their millions to take their pleasure and food in the delightful evening air. The way lies through dancing clouds of the minute pests, who rejoice mightily, and help themselves with an *abandon* that marks a

fleeting opportunity, since the edge of the woodland bounds their realm. Surely nothing is more humiliating to humanity than a mosquito. For all its upward progress, the highest sparks of philosophy are still encaged in a vessel that may be converted into a butcher's shop at the will of this pestilential flying flea!

At the edge of the *monte* is a glow that denotes a charcoal burner's encampment. With the gaining of the open 'camp' the dusk has already cast its first shades. An owl, its wings vibrating like those of a hawk, hangs, poised, in the air. Then it hurls its body downwards to strike. Its prey is insignificant enough—a passing solitary locust. Yet the action warms the estanciero's heart. Good hunting to the owl, is his prayer, and may the bird's appetite for locusts grow a millionfold!

Overhead, the duck are flying home for the night, cleaving a straight and business-like course that nothing short of a charge of shot could disturb. On the ground the vizcachas have come out of their holes to greet the night. A little early as it is yet to venture far afield, the majority are seated amidst the confusion of mounds that overlays their burrows, or beneath a sheltering clump of thistles. As the darkness grows their visible numbers increase from dozens almost to hundreds, until the little bodies with their inquisitive faces and long tails are merged into mere dark shapes by the night. They are well abroad by this time, and the whole surface

of the 'camp' is alive with the hurrying shadows that flit in short spurts from one point to another.

The passage of the river bed and of the uncomfortable thistles is, as may be imagined, not less strenuous by night than by day, and the hills and valleys of the scored road seem to be negotiated rather by instinct than by the aid of sight. All the while the tireless gaucho has ridden in close attendance on the vehicle. The distance he has covered is actually far greater than the course of the driven horses. It is his duty to see that no obstacle lies in the way, to gallop ahead to open gates, and, should they be locked, to speed to the nearest *puesto* for the key, all without detaining the progress of his *patron*.

An iron man upon an iron horse, for hour after hour and for league upon league he has kept close company at a ceaseless canter. If the road be doubtful it is for him to ascertain the way, and if the river be uncertain it is his part to test the ford. As to his stamina, for so long as a horse can canter—and a second and a third one after the first—he can ride; for the endurance of his class is one of the most remarkable features of the human race. For all that, he is no more of a mere automaton than are his brethren. He has given one proof of initiative during this very drive. When the horses, maddened by the thistle pricks, fought for their heads for a while with the estanciero, it was the gaucho who spurred forward, crashing through the sea of thistle, and who held his place just to the front of the

plunging animals, turned in his saddle to watch the struggle and to lend assistance regardless of his own skin should the battle go against the driver. And he is only one of tens of thousands. Curiously similar in tradition and feat, and equally daring almost to a man, it is a very admirable army that is made up of this salt of the plains.

The dimly seen fence-lines of the main road have come to border the route now, and from the posts the owls rise in a long series of silent, flitting, ghostly bodies. At one point a ruddy glow by the side of a halted wagon reveals a rough encampment, and illuminates the faces of an itinerant family. Then the wheels are rolling smoothly over the soft turf of the home paddocks; the air becomes laden with the heavy almond perfume of the paraiso blossom; a collection of lights appears to the front, and the carriage comes to a final halt at the house of Las Cabezas itself.

Once within doors, it is difficult to realise the fact that the country through which the expedition has been made is not as populous and central as a crowded English county. From out of the great rich land of darkness into the light of the acetylene gas that glows in the billiard-room and throughout the numerous apartments of the house—all is as at home, with the exception of the hospitality, which is super-English. Not, of course, that every estancia is in the fortunate position of this and the other more favoured specimens of the kind. Nor has the

LAS CABEZAS: THE HOMESTEAD

THE FIRST RANCHO: A RELIC OF OLD DAYS

present situation been won in a day. Prosperity in this instance dates back for its foundations to the time of pioneering, when life was doubly strenuous and infinitely less secure.

At least one reminiscence of those days is much treasured at the homestead. The mascot of Las Cabezas is a section of a deer's horn that in its time was used as a bolt to secure the door of Mr. Darbyshire's first dwelling in the *campo*. The *rancho*, of course, was built by the pioneers themselves, and was considered as a great improvement upon the covering of canvas and reeds that had necessarily sufficed until then—as no doubt it was. In any case the deer's horn bolt was an essential feature in those days, as the following incident will show. The happenings occurred not in Entre Rios but in the province of Buenos Aires, where in 1874 the Indian frontier was distant only forty-five leagues from the capital itself.

It was in that year that a number of Indians, estimated at about three thousand, collected on the frontier, when numerous small bands crossed over for the purpose of raiding. Mr. Darbyshire, who was then settled in the near neighbourhood, heard rumours of the unrest, and determined himself to find out the actual state of affairs. So he set out, mounted on a good horse, and armed with his revolver. For some distance all seemed tranquil enough, and the cattle were grazing in undisturbed peace.

After a while he saw three riders upon the summit of a slight elevation in the distance. As an estancia lay between him and the wilder country beyond he saw nothing ominous in the appearance of the mounted forms ; there was no reason why they should not be *peones* out and about in the natural course of their duties. A nearer approach, however, revealed something else. A long spear was pricking up against the horizon above each rider's form, leaving no doubt as to their real identity—marauding Indians.

When this became clear to him, Darbyshire turned his horse and spurred back the way he had come, with the Indians hotfoot in pursuit. There was little doubt as to the issue of the race, since the settler was well mounted, and could more than hold his own. After a few hundred yards of this, however, the position of the hunted became a little galling. One white man with a revolver was more than a match for three Indians armed only with spears, he argued to himself. Thus valour overcame discretion. He turned his horse once more, and awaited the onset of the dusky marauders.

These came on with all the impetuosity of their warlike race. The object of the attack is admittedly a good shot, and, moreover, was perfectly collected at the time. Yet he completely missed the foremost of the charging Indians with his first chamber. He has since put the failure down to the heaving of the horse beneath ; but at the time, he says, he could not

understand the affair at all. Fortunately he was able to ward off the point of the long lance with his wrist, although the effort cost him a severe wound.

The second Indian was now charging in turn, and this one Darbyshire wounded with his next shot, but not sufficiently to cripple the dusky warrior to any serious extent. As he was preparing to meet the third he was attacked in the rear by the first, who had turned his horse again, and who delivered a thrust in the back that sent Darbyshire to the ground, while, worst of all, his revolver was jerked from his hand by the force of the fall. There was no chance of recovering this, since he was immediately attacked by all three of the hostile natives, and was forced to leap and dodge for his life. The affair had reached an unexpected and unpleasant pass, and there was no doubt that the settler was in an exceedingly tight corner.

At length, by a desperate effort, he managed to seize the shaft of one of the lances, and to break it in half. Almost immediately afterwards he received a blow on the head from the end of the lance that remained in the Indian's hand, so forcefully dealt that it felled him to the ground. Luck is not always confined to fiction; an astonishing piece of good fortune attended this moment of very stern reality. By some extraordinarily propitious chance Darbyshire, as he fell, tumbled directly upon his lost revolver, and rose up the next instant with the weapon in his hand. Had this not occurred, his death on the

spot was as certain as can be anything on this earth.

This readjustment of the comparative equality of the fighting power produced a halt in the aggressive tactics of the Indians, while Darbyshire waited with his pistol in readiness. The hostile natives had met with a far tougher resistance than they had expected, in which Darbyshire himself, it must be admitted, had caught something of a Tartar. The natives hesitated, while the condition of their wounded member became worse. In the end this decided them to be content with the capture of the settler's horse. With this they rode off accordingly, fortunately not perceiving how rapidly Darbyshire was weakening from his wounds. For, in addition to the very serious thrust that had penetrated his back, he was losing blood rapidly from half a dozen minor spear hurts, and it was many a long day ere he was able to climb up into the saddle once more.

This story I give, as I received it, at first hand. For some reasons I regret the absence of an eye-witness who might tell the tale with the impartiality of a spectator. For I am convinced that there are many details appertaining to this combat that have been withheld by the modesty of a man of action speaking of his own deeds. And, as it is not for me to embroider the facts from my own imagination, I leave it to the reader to read between the lines.

There are two morals hanging to this tale. The first is: do not go out in search of Indians with

a revolver that is not made fast by a strap to the wrist. The second is: do not grumble at the present absence of hostile natives of whom to go in search. The modern condition of the plains may be tame and bloodless by comparison with the past; but the chief enjoyment of these episodes lies in reminiscence—on the part of those who survive!

Ere leaving the topic of the Entre Rios *campo* a personal reference is necessary for which I must apologise doubly to the public, since I cannot take it into my full confidence in the matter. A very distinguished writer and politician who reviewed my last book at a length and with a kindly brilliancy that flattered the subject, offered, amongst other things, to pay for a bottle of 'vino seco' at the first 'esquina' where we might meet if I were better acquainted with the 'camp' than he. The knowledge displayed in the article sufficed to convince me that, should we ever meet on Argentine soil, I must go thirsty unless I relied on my own pocket for the wine. Yet I was a little surprised at the time to have met with no trace of the southern career of so well known a person. But on this occasion the trail of the past was revealed to me almost immediately in Entre Rios, a province of which I had previously the most imperfect knowledge. If half the tales concerning my lenient critic are true, what foreigner knows Entre Rios if he does not! But the bubbling days of the province, when Englishmen flung themselves, a little quixotically perhaps, into the

local cauldron of politics, and occasionally—I am told—held up towns *pour encourager les autres*, are now no more. Yet such feats ring very truly of the *campo*, even though its herbage be wrapped about with comparative prose. Whatever its commercial vicissitudes, completely prosy it could never be!

CHAPTER XXXII

THROUGH ENTRE RIOS

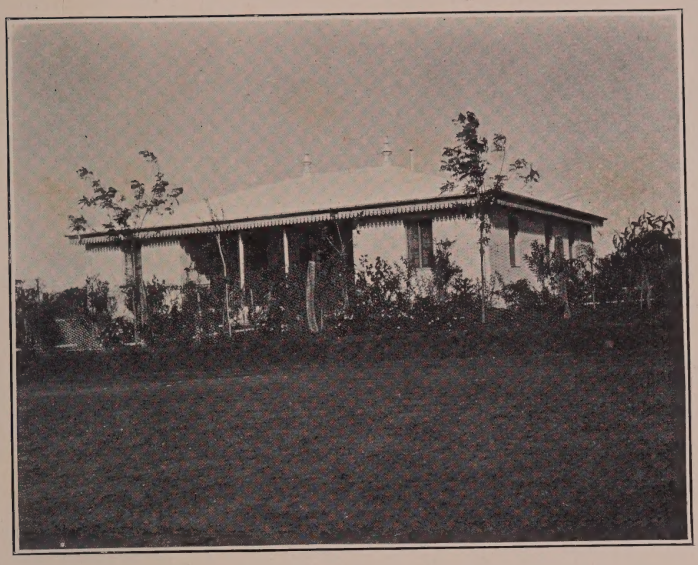
Paraná—The Capital of the Province—Buildings, Avenues, and Gardens of the Town—A Centre of Government and Education—Police Bands—A Favourite Promenade—The La Perla Theatre—Spanish Drama—Some Features of the Art — The Commercial Port — Bajada Grande — Some Industries of the District—Railway Workshops—Native Timber and its Uses—From Paraná to the East—Aspects of the Landscape—Locusts by the Way—The Main Rivers and Inland Wells—Nogoya—Aspect of the *Monte*—A Park-like Scene—Tala—Native and Imported Vegetation—The Gualeguay River—A Fine National Road.

PARANÁ, the capital of Entre Rios Province, is an exceedingly pleasant town, both in its architecture and natural surroundings. Whether approached by river or by rail, the place does not reveal itself all at once, since its chief centres are somewhat remote both from the passenger docks and the railway station. Yet the town possesses not a little of which it may very legitimately boast.

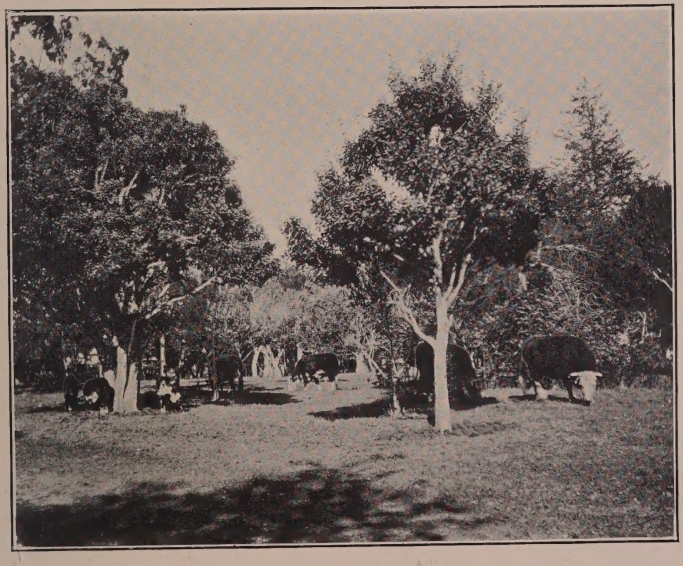
In the first place the public gardens with the imposing buildings that surround them are scarcely to be surpassed in their beauty by those of any other city in the Republic. The principal of these is the Plaza de Mayo. The large central

expanse is ablaze with blossom, amidst which are prominent the purple bunches of the acacia and the red and white flowers of the oleander trees in their season. The cathedral dominates all the other buildings that fringe the spot, and indeed the stately white twin towers, whose points are worked out in blue to match the great azure dome that rises beside them, stand out as the crown of the capital from whichever aspect and from whatever distance it is viewed.

So far as vegetation and expanse are concerned, the Plaza Alvear, nearer the river, outrivals even the central square. Set in the midst of this more rural and altogether charming spot is the magnificent church of San Miguel, with its delicate towers rising high above the graceful palms and varied trees of the plaza. From this point a broad and shaded avenue, the Paseo Rivadavia, leads to the Urquiza gardens by the river itself. These represent Paraná's last word in the matter of horticultural decoration. Indeed there are portions of the Parque Urquiza which are scarcely yet matured, but the aspect of the whole is pleasing to a degree. Broad walks and flights of stone stairways wind about the slopes, and from the higher expanses dedicated to the trees and flowers the panorama of the river and of the surrounding country extends itself far and wide. For Paraná, fortunately for its picturesque ethics, stands upon rolling and comparatively broken country.



TYPICAL SMALLER RESIDENCE: COLÓN



PLEASANT PASTURES

A very short acquaintance with the town suffices to convince the newcomer that the place is well worthy of its status. The Casa de Gobierno, the seat of provincial authority and the residence of the governor of Entre Rios, is a massive and stately pile worthy of almost any capital in the world; and the college of *Cristo Redentor* vies with the remaining buildings in appearance and equipment. For Paraná is now a noted centre of learning as well as of government, and the system of education as pursued here is particularly modern and efficient. In the centre of the town a new and very large theatre has just been erected, and, as to the tramways, though the vehicles are still horse-drawn, the system is now on the point of being electrified.

So much for the main aspects of a town in which the spirit of progress, although emphatically asserted, has not been permitted to run riot at the expense of architectural stateliness and natural beauty. From a social point of view the capital is by no means deficient in attractions. Apart from the regulation entertainments of a private order, the fashionable meeting-place for the townsfolk of an evening is the Plaza de Mayo. Here the leisured classes of the place promenade beneath the acacia and oleander blossoms to the music of a very excellent police band. It is rather a curious fact, by the way, that throughout Argentina nearly all such public music is rendered by these police bands. Of formidable numerical strength, and comprising really efficient

musicians, these companies of players are attached to the police force by courtesy rather than anything else, and their status corresponds more or less to that of the string orchestras of the British Guard regiments.

Later on, since the fine new theatre is not at the moment provided with a company of actors—the ambitious performances in a town numbering less than forty thousand inhabitants are necessarily intermittent—it is as well to stroll to the small La Perla, where lesser plays and variety entertainments are offered. The interior of the place is crowded, the main area beneath with the humbler townsfolk, and the balcony above, lightly partitioned off into improvised boxes, with the superior classes, their ranks brightened by various military uniforms. The behaviour of the entire audience is quite exemplary. A delay in the ascent of the curtain is productive after a while of a thunderous foot-stamping on the part of those seated below—volleys of sound that, beaten out in rhythmic unison, resemble the changing beats of a drum. But the noisy protest is quite unaccompanied by excitement on the part of its authors. The hint is given out with an impartial deliberation that does not preclude conversation at the same time.

When at length their time comes the plays prove to be the popular short Spanish dramas. The subject of nearly all is the orthodox one, the attack on a fair woman's honour by the villain, and

A CAMPO GRAVEYARD

its strenuous salvation by the hero. Abounding as do these dramas in rhetoric, emotion, and the tremendous explosions of primary passion, they are delightfully straightforward in their ethics. From start to finish the audience is never left for one moment in doubt as to who is the hero, who the villain. The villain prowls the stage, a declared wolf; the hero treads it with the majesty of the lion. Nevertheless, the acting is undeniably fine of its kind. What need is there for the more subtle touches when human fire and sudden death are portrayed with a degree of vivid realism that holds even the most intellectual portion of the audience! Such strictly virtuous plays as these, moreover, are the worst possible pegs upon which to hang the pleasing epigram. There is a distinctly artistic touch, however, which I have noticed in many. The conclusion is not necessarily joyful! With the villain foiled and driven from the stage, it does not in the least follow that the intact heroine will fall into the arms of the hero.

As is usual in these plays, the efforts of the prompter in his small box at the front of the stage are altogether too audible. Indeed, he himself is something of a public character, since when his voice becomes unduly stentorian he is rewarded by a round of hisses on the part of the audience that raises him almost to the status of an actor! On the whole, it must be admitted that these dramas are exceedingly ably rendered, although there are

unkind folk who assert that the performance consists principally of intervals!

The commercial port of Paraná, Bajada Grande, lies at a distance of some miles from the main city, and is connected with it by means of a branch of the Entre Rios Railway. Bajada Grande, by the way, is the name by which the original town of Paraná was known. The port is one that permits ocean-going steamers of fair size within its waters, and its importance is rapidly increasing with that of the ramifications of the railway lines.

The line that connects Bajada Grande with Paraná itself passes through broken country intersected by one or two minor but well-accentuated ravines. The soil of the neighbourhood consists largely of lime and gypsum, and kilns abound just here, for ten thousand tons of lime are put out on an average each year. Brickmaking, too, is an industry that flourishes especially in this part of the province, and charcoal burning is responsible for the employment of a considerable amount of labour. At Bajada itself is a bone-mill, the only place of its kind in the province, that grinds the skulls and horns of cattle to powder, and ships away annually some fifteen hundred tons of the produce.

Almost directly opposite, upon the farther bank of the river, is Colastiné, the ocean-going port of Santa Fé, and the masts of its shipping are just visible on the horizon, standing up as though in a challenge to those of the steamers at Bajada Grande.

A contrast to these two flourishing centres is very near at hand. At the end of the town remotest from Bajada Grande is the old and now disused port of Paraná. Dominated by the Urquiza gardens, the derelict place affords a picturesque, if somewhat melancholy, sight. A collection of old-fashioned low square houses dotting a small plain at the foot of the hills marks the spot. Its chief characteristic is a brooding quietude. Its days of industry are over, since the Paraná river, in one of its most unkind moods, silted up the waters upon which it depended, and abruptly ended its days as a port.

At Paraná are situated the workshops of the Entre Rios Railway. Although they cannot compare in size with those of the larger railways such as the Great Southern, and Buenos Aires and Pacific, the 'shops' are undoubtedly models of their kind. Here the engines are kept in order and repaired—even to the extent of the manufacture of their various parts, such as fire-boxes, rods, and the like. The scene is a busy one, with the steam-hammers thundering at their work, and in another part the molten metal flowing into its castings. The carpentering department is still more interesting, since here the South American native timber is brought prominently into play. A number of coach bodies are in the course of construction, fine cars not only of great strength, but of exceedingly handsome appearance. Indeed, the finish of the work speaks well for the Italian and French workmen who are for the most

part employed. The native cedar of Paraguay is found very suitable for the coaches and for their furniture; though the fine yellow wood of the lapacho, too, strong, durable, and elastic, is extremely popular. Quebracho and pitribi—a timber that much resembles teak—go to make up the four species that are chiefly employed.

The 'shops' here are of a curiously comprehensive character. There is a department that attends to the upholstery, another section devoted to the tinsmiths, and a large building set apart for the purposes of printing and bookbinding. This includes, of course, a spacious type-setting and composing room, since the time tables and all other publications of the company spring into printed birth here. The entire establishment adjoins the station, by the side of which is the company's cricket-ground. Just here is a very clever device, too, by means of which the engines draw their coal by their own steam power. Small trucks filled with the fuel are set upon rails that slope upwards until they attain to the height of a tender. Employing an ingenious piece of mechanism, the engine pulls these by a steel wire to its hungry tender, into which the contents are emptied.

There are probably few who do not leave the town of Paraná without a certain regret, and who do not afterwards call to mind with pleasure its fine buildings, gardens, and its hospitable atmosphere. But too long a stay might well be wearisome—to others,

including the reader. The course is to the eastward now, right across the province from the banks of the Paraná to Concordia upon the Uruguay.

The train is soon clear of the station, passing through rolling country carpeted with yellow poppies, and, in the dips, with purple swamp flowers. In the midst of these surroundings some goats are grazing—great long-haired creatures with amazing horns of a length and circumference at the base that must necessarily instil a certain degree of politeness in their owners' behaviour.

The line is rising, bordered now by a far greater number and variety of wild flowers. From the higher level at which the train is travelling the scene has rapidly developed into broad panorama. The roofs of Paraná beneath the dome and towers of the cathedral are already distant. To the south of the town spreads a great plain darkened by the broad band of vegetation that lies closely about the river's course, a green curtain from which protrude the white sails of the vessels upon the invisible waters. Away from the neighbourhood of the river are other great sheets of woodland extending like deep shadows across the lighter earth. From the very moderate elevation at which it is viewed the extent of the panorama is surprising.

The hills have sunk downwards now, and the train is running through a land of very gentle undulations. It must be admitted that this portion of the journey, though it is effected through smiling

and very fertile 'camp,' presents no feature of particular interest. The *saltonas*, the young locusts are out, it is true, for it is a locust year, and from the ground where they swarm comes the disagreeable odour characteristic of the tribe. There are sheets of corrugated iron by the side of the line, too, placed to entrap the advancing hordes, and there are digging men, and mounds of earth under which lie the corpses of many millions of the pests. But as for the scenery itself, it is merely typical of pastoral Argentina, and therefore, I trust, already a little familiar to the reader.

Upon the train is an official who is carefully inspecting the wells and water tanks at each station at which a halt is made. These require a certain amount of supervision just now, since the waters of the Paraná are low. And it is a rather curious fact that when the waters of the Paraná have sunk, from whatever cause—whether drought or even the prevalence of a certain wind—the wells for a distance of forty miles and more from the river banks die down to a proportionate extent in sympathy.

The old town of Nogoya is the first upon the line that has some out-of-the-ordinary object to show. Here, in the neighbourhood of the station is a large grain elevator with twelve steel columns that rise up in a row, and that are each said to contain six hundred tons of wheat. Beyond this point the country has resolved itself into almost a dead flat,

and the *monte* has begun to spread its timber over the turf. The trees here are essentially native. Hard of wood, thorny, and of lowly elevation, they comprise the ñandubay, sombra de toro, espinillo, tala, piquillin, chañar, and a few small specimens of the famous quebracho that abounds to the north.

The aspect of this wooded land is strangely park-like. In the absence of undergrowth of any kind each tree stands out clearly from the turf, at intervals regular enough, moreover, to tempt the newcomer into the belief that the lowly forest has been artificially planted; which, of course, is not the case. The trees, although few exceed twenty feet in height, have all the appearance of woodland giants in miniature, with their stately air and complicated ramifications above. Yet so slender and so gnarled is their timber that it refuses to serve for any weightier purposes than those of fence-posts, firewood, and other such minor objects. There is, nevertheless, sufficient demand for its employment to cause it to be distinctly valuable.

The train has halted at Sola, and is now speeding onwards towards Tala, drawing a cloud of thistle-down in its wake that flutters and whirls in exact imitation of a snowstorm. All the while the stretches of park-like *monte,* with the cattle and sheep grazing amidst the trunks, alternate with stretches of blue linseed flower, yellow corn, and green maize. Tala is, of course, named after the tree that abounds in the country, and, as is often the result of such efforts

of nomenclature, that particular tree, as well as all the other native timber, has disappeared entirely from the face of the *campo* in the immediate neighbourhood of the place.

Here, as a matter of fact, poplar groves are evident for the first time during the journey. These and the peach orchards and orange groves surround Tala very closely, lending it an appearance unusually verdant for a 'camp' town; for the majority of these, in the past, at all events, have paid unduly little attention to the benefits of shade as rendered by branches. There are now numerous signs of improvement in this respect—but many a small township still protrudes its houses from the soil as baldly as the hulls of vessels rise up from the sea.

The country has sunk now, and the train is rumbling over a bridge that spans the Gualeguay river, whose temporarily attenuated stream goes winding through the greenery of its banks. Close by the line here runs the national road, a highway that is held to be the finest in the Republic. As it passes over this stretch of low-lying and frequently submerged country, with its series of lofty embankments and broad bridges, it is certainly the most monumental structure of its kind that I have seen in Argentina, where the prevalent lack of stone in so many provinces goes to cripple the art of the road engineers.

Shortly after the passage of the river the ground

rises again, and beyond the village of Rocamora the *monte* gives way to unusually large areas of wheat. Basavilbaso lies to the front now, a doubly important place; for it is not only the chief railway junction of Entre Rios, but the head-quarters of the Jewish colony founded by Baron Hirsch.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THROUGH ENTRE RIOS (*continued*)

Basavilbaso—Growth of the Town—An Important Railway Junction—A Cosmopolitan Gathering—The Jewish Colony—Some Aspects of the Settlement—The Work of the Hebrew Agriculturalist—Urquiza—Dominguez—The River Yuqueri—An Idyllic Spot—A Sudden Change of Landscape—The Entrance to Palm Land—Concordia—An Important Commercial Town—Variation in Soil—Water Selling—Local Fruit Industry—The River Port—The Sport of the Floods—Aspects of the Uruguay River—The Argentine and Uruguayan Banks—Waterfalls—The Port of Uruguay—General Plan of Provincial Towns—Minor Hotels—Their Peculiarities—Colón—The Lemco Industry—Its Headquarters and Ramifications—A Vast Enterprise—Some Ethics of Landowning—Pedigree Cattle Imported during the Past Decade.

BASAVILBASO affords yet another instance of a progressive Argentine town. It is true that the place is as yet in its earliest infancy. But it is a healthy urban child, growing with a rapidity that will probably end with some prosaic curtailment of its unwieldy name for the purpose of commercial convenience. English residents in Argentina, with a view to time-saving euphemism, have altered the name of Buenos Aires to that of B.A. There is no reason why, in the course of time, Basavilbaso

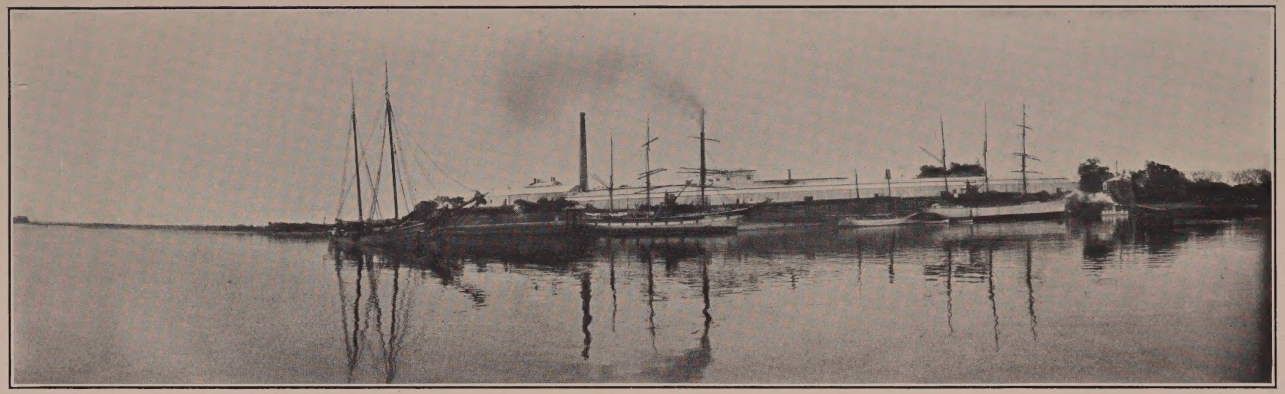
should not attain to a status that will entitle it to be christened B.B. pure and simple !

A few years ago six passenger trains a day was the locomotive allowance of Basavilbaso. Now no less than twenty-six come in daily from north, east, south, and west ; for the four lines that extend from the junction prick out in the first instance almost exactly to the four cardinal points of the compass. With the advent of the freight trains in addition to these, it may be imagined that Basavilbaso is now a busy and important place. To do it justice, it looks the part, and handles its grain, cereals, produce in general, cattle, and human freight, with a very pleasing and bustling attention to business.

The platforms at Basavilbaso are wont to hold a strangely cosmopolitan crowd. In addition to the ordinary wayfarers and broad-breeched *peones*, there are folk, speaking Russian and German, whose features mark them unmistakably as Jews ; there are Russians and Germans, too, who to all appearances are of Gentile extraction. Southern women with shawls about their heads, northern women in sunbonnets, two or three travelling Turks, and a company of Italian labourers—all these are walking and talking in close proximity to each other. To complete the heterogeneous gathering, a very stout Argentine priest gazes with ill-concealed disfavour upon the figure of a Russian rabbi, greasy as to his clothes and skin, and with a small curl twisted and tucked up behind each ear.

The Jewish colony in this neighbourhood is now of great extent, and comprises an area almost as large as an average English county. It is no difficult matter to ascertain the moment when its frontiers have been crossed. Spanish and Italian names no longer decorate the local stores and warehouses. In their places are inscribed such designations as Moïses Gerolstein and Aaron Fuchs, while the features of the persons who stand in the doorways correspond to the nomenclature above. The long and low carts that move along the country roads are of a pattern entirely distinct from anything without the colony, and the aspect of the workers themselves is naturally a little apart from that of the Argentine *peon*. Even the buildings are possessed of a certain distinctive individuality of their own, and the walls of many of the humblest *ranchos* are of red brick, the usual structure of reeds being only apparent in the thatching of the roof.

The great majority of the colonists hail from Russia, since in that country the Hebrew race has been brought into closer contact with agriculture than elsewhere. A certain number, however, come from eastern Germany, and from other parts. With the best will in the world, it cannot be said that the Jew is universally popular here—indeed, is not the attainment of that enviable state postponed throughout the world until the time when the unfortunate race shall have consummated wholesale the ideals towards which this colony is one of the attempts?



LEMCO AND OXO FACTORY: COLÓN

SHIPPING ON THE URUGUAY

Nevertheless he has undoubtedly justified his claim to be looked upon with consideration as an agriculturalist, and as one who can grow wheat, and maize, and linseed with the best in the land. It is not given to many to see Jewish youths on horseback 'rounding up' horses and cattle: but the sight is a common enough one here. There are complaints on the part of some, I believe, to the effect that the colony is swelling unduly in size. But a grievance of this kind should be nowhere more easily adjustable than in a country so hungry for labour as Argentina.

Leaving Basavilbaso, the train proceeds due north for a while. At Libaros, the next halting-place, a swarm of *saltonas* is on the move. They are proceeding in decorous fashion by road, and men, women, and children of Israel are flapping empty sacks on either flank of the hopping army to keep it to the broad and bare highway. Urquiza, the following station, is of interest rather for the name it bears than for any other peculiarity. Not that the nomenclature is uncommon; for Urquiza, the famous Entreriano governor and warrior who freed Argentina from the tyranny of Rozas in 1852, stands as godparent in Entre Rios not only to a town, but to a host of streets, plazas, and other municipal attributes as well. When it has found them, Argentina honours its departed great not once but many times over.

The *monte* has come into being again by the side

of the line. Here and there the tree-trunks stand out from the tall carpet of feathery white grass tops as though they were sprouting from a landscape of snow. Beyond Dominguez (another famous Argentine name applied to towns) the woodland grows in density, and the size of the individual trees increases as the train speeds on to the north, while the great white heads of the tall fennel grow ever more abundant.

From the thriving town of Villaquay, delightfully situated upon its river, the road branches slightly to the east. The landscape becomes of a more rolling order again, and more thickly spread than ever with the varied clumps of *campo* flowers. In their midst are grazing numerous herds of Polled-Angus cattle: for the breed is popular in northern and eastern Entre Rios and also in the province of Corrientes.

The most pleasant bit of scenery, however, that exists on the entire road is reserved until nearly the end, when within some half-dozen miles of Concordia itself. The River Yuqueri is altogether idyllic. A narrow sheet of clear water hastening at the feet of its tall, wooded banks, it presents a spice of boldness that is lacking in any other river in the district, and is reminiscent rather of a reach in a Scottish stream, hung about with far more luxuriant and varied foliage.

And then, after the passage of the Yuqueri, comes a surprise—in fact one of the most curious and irresponsible alterations in landscape that the

province of Entre Rios has to offer. The tropics have apparently been entered, and without the slightest warning. All about stretch green slopes covered with palms as far as the eye can reach. There is no sign of any other tree or shrub. Tall palms with feathery tops are everywhere, pricking up now at wide intervals, now in closer companies, and now in dense groves. They are the very last things to be expected in the neighbourhood: in such abundance especially, since no single pioneer of the fan-like tribe is evident before the serried ranks of the main forest are entered.

It is true that those familiar with the neighbourhood are but little impressed by this exotic wedge of vegetation. The inhabitants are accustomed to view the phenomenon from a prosaically practical standpoint. Thus they point in disdain to the white sand, light red sandstone, and sparse gravel of the soil, and condemn the district as fit for nothing else but to rear these palms—as unprofitable to a degree, in fact, and altogether unworthy of fertile Entre Rios. Alas! The picturesque and the profitable seem to blend in very few places other than tourist hotels, and even here the connexion is sometimes rather forced.

For miles the palms remain on either side. In one place a small patch of *monte* has dared to intrude itself into the midst of their realm, but the broad shining leaves of the rightful owners of the soil gleam out amidst the other foliage and dominate it

completely. Then the tall, straight-stemmed tropical growths spring up alone once more from the grass in even more extensive groves than before, until they fall away in an ending as abrupt as was their beginning. There are hills upon the horizon to the left now, and beneath their slopes spread the roofs of Concordia, on the banks of the Uruguay. The province has been traversed from its one boundary river to the other.

The interests of the town of Concordia are commercial, as opposed to the political and academic influences of Paraná, the capital. It possesses some fine streets, a number of churches, public edifices, and spacious bank buildings, and is well found in the way of plazas. For all that, the town can in no way compare with Paraná in the ethics of imposing beauty and general stateliness. Pleasant place that it is, the city altogether lacks the finish and distinction that characterise the buildings and atmosphere of the capital.

Concordia has but lately come into prosperity, since it has been served by the railway for no longer a period than eight years. It is therefore new, so far as the more important and prominent portions of the town are concerned, nearly all of which are naturally devoted to mercantile purposes. The chief square, the Plaza Veinte-cinco de Mayo, has been delightfully arranged and laid out, and the spot will undoubtedly gain much with time, as its trees have not yet attained to full maturity.

LEMCO SCHOOLHOUSE: COLÓN

THE BATHING HOUSE: COLÓN

Amongst its other advantages Concordia is situated upon shingle, a material which is not a little valued in the neighbouring districts that, as is the case in all central Argentina, are entirely innocent of any pebbly substance. Indeed, in the neighbourhood of the river bank, when once without the radius of the main streets, the sensation of the crisp crunching of the round stones beneath the foot is quite noteworthy after some months of the soft padding upon yielding alluvial soil—something akin, in fact, to the taste of champagne after a course of treacle and water, although I must confess never to have sampled the latter beverage.

The topic of liquids brings one to a rather curious feature of Concordia. The sale of drinking water is a staple industry of the town. A common sight in the streets is the progress of a cart that bears a large ornamental barrel, brightly bound and painted, accompanied by a man who delivers the water in a bucket at the house doors. The charge for each pailful is, I believe, two and a half centavos. The river and well water in the neighbourhood, although it is said to be free from insanitary contamination, is unfitted for beverage purposes, and thus the trade in this special liquid has sprung into being.

In common with most of the surrounding districts, the country here is extremely productive in fruit. Of these growths tomatoes and grapes form the chief mercantile assets. The former are largely

exported to the south, and a certain quantity of wine is made from the latter that compares favourably with the vintage of other portions of the province, although it cannot rival the produce of the grape that hails from Mendoza and San Juan in the west of the Republic.

The river port is now a very imposing place, provided with a massive concrete and stone pier. Approaching this from the shore side, a couple of relics are to be met with of one of the Uruguay's flood spasms. In a grassy hollow from which the river itself is invisible lie a schooner and a roomy barge. The spot where they rest is some three hundred yards distant from the stream, and is shut off from the waters by various houses and earthy banks that intervene. Thus the aspect of the stranded craft is incongruously dry and forlorn. The flood that swept them there by a devious course must have been one of the most formidable outbursts of the stream. It is difficult to imagine that the waters will again reach the spot and thus release the couple of melancholy outcasts from their dry and grassy bed. Yet it is unwise to doubt the possibility of any feat whatever on the part of the great rivers here.

The current of the Uruguay, although its waters are unusually low for the moment, is very swift at this point. This is evident enough when once in one of the small launches that ply between Concordia and the important Uruguayan town of Salto that lies almost opposite, but a little to the north, upon the

other bank. Jutting out from the Argentine bank, and extending at one point to almost three-quarters of the river's breadth, are great ledges of rock, some standing well above the level of the waters, others half submerged by the tide. It is necessary to steam well out round the outskirts of these dangerous strata, and in the limited fairway the stream comes boiling down to tug fiercely at the throbbing bow of the launch.

Once in mid-channel, the aspect of the Uruguayan bank compares with the Argentine shore much as usual throughout the length of the river. The bluffs of the first are bold and lofty when contrasted with the contour of the Entre Rios land, although this latter is more accentuated in height than is generally the case in the province. The Banda Oriental side, moreover, is thickly littered with great boulders. It is certain that the ledges of rock in the river, although they only come to the surface on the Argentine side of the waters, are merely prolongations of the Uruguayan strata. Curiously enough, the Entre Rios shore once attained, this rocky formation sinks beneath the surface of the pebble-covered soil, and reappears no more.

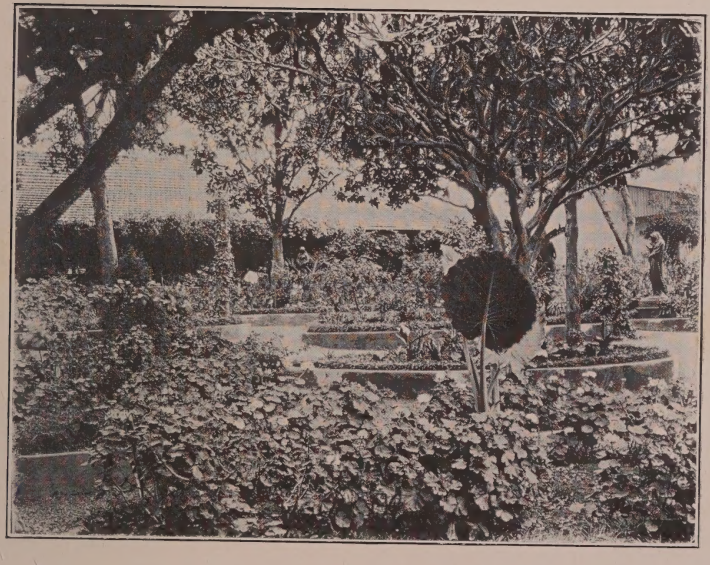
Just to the north of Salto, the navigation of the river is interrupted by some falls that extend right across the bed. The obstacle is lowly enough, and the drop from the high level to the low is not more than a few yards in extent. Yet the long white line that bars the river tumbles and foams in the

sunshine as strenuously as though it were rivalling the mighty turmoil of the Iguazú itself. The course of the Uruguay is much broken here, since there is another set of falls some five leagues further up the stream.

Approaching the town of Salto, a number of small schooners laden with fruit and timber come hastening down. Borne swiftly by tide and sails, they glide past one of the smaller Mihanovich passenger steamers that is ploughing her way against the stream. Upon the Uruguayan banks are rows of washerwomen, and innumerable coveys of white garments spread out upon the warm rocks to dry. Nothing short of a cataclysm, apparently, would stop this daily task of washing. In Salto itself it is a *fiesta* day. The bunting is flying all over the town, and the rockets are banging and cracking in the blue sky above. But the washerwomen work on, heedless even of such noisy festal celebrations as these.

Having just crossed from Concordia to Uruguay, a journey that occupies less than half an hour, it may perhaps savour of anomaly to state that Uruguay is no nearer than a hundred miles to the south of the chief Entre Rios port on the eastern river. The confusion arises from a weakness for the multiplication and ubiquitous scattering of a favourite item of nomenclature. The Entre Rios port of Uruguay is the second in importance to Concordia of those situated upon the river. It may be approached from the northern town either by railway

AN ENTRE RIOS GARDEN



THE VISITORS' GARDEN: COLÓN

viâ Basavilbaso or by river steamer direct. As a port it has recently been much extended, and can now accommodate a formidable number of ocean-going and river vessels. As a town, it is constructed much on the lines of all other thriving commercial centres of moderate size.

Indeed, all provincial towns of the kind are wont to vary only in minor degrees from the accepted model. The plaza, more or less gay and well-kept as the case may be, is almost invariably to be met with in the centre of the spot, and upon this give the public buildings, the principal church, and the best hotel. There may be variations, of course, in the distribution of these edifices ; but never in the general plan of the town. The square blocks and parallel streets may be counted on with the same certainty as the uprising of the ' camp ' thistles in spring. The model is undoubtedly a good and efficient one, and, amongst its other merits, the simple plan holds back no disconcerting secrets of the byways and alleys from the grateful stranger, since the confusing network of back streets that form an attribute of almost every European town have no existence here. Perhaps no scheme adapts itself more readily to urban stateliness and originalities of embellishment. Extended as it is to the most insignificant townships, it is a little difficult to suggest a means by which it could be improved, however crude and inartistic must necessarily be a certain number of its examples.

While upon the subject of provincial towns, a few words may not be out of place concerning the hotels in the more out-of-the-way and less-visited spots. The accommodation offered by the majority has improved vastly during the past few years. Nevertheless it stands to reason that a certain number, situated remotely from the beaten tracks, still cling to the traditions that accompanied travel in a less exigent age.

In one of these hostelries the company of guests are treated much in the way of a family party. The atmosphere, in consequence, gains in benevolence, but at the same time the procedure is responsible for some of the more regrettable features of life as lived in the public home. The visitor, for instance, may be led by the welcoming host to a bed in a room that contains three other couches, all occupied. Objections to such close quarters are futile. Their expression serves no other end but to reveal the traveller's unsociable qualities to the mildly disapproving landlord. Even the offer to pay for all the beds in another apartment, and thus to reserve the entire room, is resolutely negatived. A señor who occupies four beds has nevertheless a capacity for only one meal at a time, whereas four señores who occupy the same space will eat four meals—and pay for them! In any case, he will continue—perhaps in reply to a daring offer to 'go the whole hog' in the way of entertainment and finance; it is not for him to incommode the rest of his

customers, and, after all, what in the world can be the objection to sharing a room with three other good Christians ?

There is a silver lining to this want of privacy. The crowded bedrooms engender a more intimate acquaintance with the local types of humanity than could be obtained from a more unorthodox acquaintance, sociable as the majority of travellers are. I have a friend who tells a tale illustrative of the length to which these gregarious tendencies can be carried. He was shown to his bed late in the night at a small and remote 'camp' inn, a place of shadows rather than of light. Awaking in the morning, he was amazed to find the room occupied—as it had been throughout the night—by a rather dusky nursemaid and a whole bevy of juvenile charges ! I entertain no doubt as to the accuracy of the story, for the narrator is truthful to a fault ; but it is impossible not to harbour some misgivings concerning his perfect sobriety on the evening of that startling event !

Situated on the banks of the river between Concordia and Concepcion is the port of Colón, a picturesque spot backed by lightly rolling and exceedingly pleasant country. Colón has come much into prominence of late owing to the great development of the Lemco and Oxo interests at the spot. Until six or seven years ago Fray Bentos, upon the Uruguayan bank, was the chief centre to which the great herds of cattle were

driven, and where the slaughtering was conducted for the purpose of the various products such as Lemco, Oxo, corned beef, ox tongues, as well as for such others as hides, horns, and tallow. The Lemco town of Fray Bentos, with its great factory set amidst the broad, shaded avenues flanked by their trim, flower-encircled houses, its 'mess,' schools, and recreation halls, its delightful establishments set apart for the managers, and its general mingling of the aesthetic and of the practical, is undoubtedly one of the pleasantest places to be met with throughout the whole length of the Uruguay river.

So far as its commercial side was concerned, Fray Bentos rightfully claimed for many years to be 'the greatest food exchange in the world, where the strength, vigour, and vast freshness of the pampas is collected for the use and benefit of the crowded millions of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.' To this title, alas! the pleasant spot can no longer pretend. Yet the premier position has remained in the family, as it were, since it has been usurped by the company's works at Colón. Here the installation is of the very latest order of all, while the factory building itself is not only amazingly huge, but compact as well. Indeed, the chief difference between the old and the new lies in the fact that, where Fray Bentos swelled gradually in order to cope with the growing needs, Colón, benefiting from the experience of its maturer brother, came to life in

one fell swoop, with its very long principal building accurately arranged to turn almost unlimited quantities of cattle into soup without further ado. But, although less rambling, the imposing Colón premises are yet the larger of the two; thus the really gigantic nature of the establishment may be imagined. Its wharf, schools, clubs, streets, private houses, and general paraphernalia, moreover, are proportionately fine, since the company is admirably thorough in all that it undertakes.

Tremendous as are these working centres to which the hundreds of thousands of cattle come to yield up their carcases, perhaps the chief interest of the company lies in its pastoral possessions. To one who has not witnessed the actual manipulation of such concerns as the Liebig estancias, the conception of the gigantic territories and herds involved is scarcely possible. It is true that the Lemco and Oxo farms are not entirely confined to Argentine soil, since more than one-half of the area of the South American farms, as a matter of fact, swells over into the neighbouring republics of Uruguay and Paraguay. As a study in the ownership of land and stock, however, the possessions of the company—which, of course, has large landed interests also in other parts of the world—afford matter of no little interest.

The difference in the figures of the past and of the present are in themselves instructive of the rate at which progress has been made. Thus ten years

ago the area of the Lemco estates in South America was slightly beneath half a million acres—a respectable enough holding in itself, but one that is entirely eclipsed by the present situation. For now the total number of acres owned by the company has almost reached the astonishing amount of one and three-quarter millions!

As regards the cattle, the advance has been even more marked. Ten years ago seventy thousand head grazed upon the Lemco lands; at the present day no less than three hundred and twenty-five thousand are supported by the estates, and the number is undoubtedly still on the increase. The extent of the organisation may be imagined when it is explained that in Argentina alone the company owns eighteen of these great territories upon the excellent pastures of which the cattle graze. With the commercial ethics of the enterprise I have nothing to do here, although these apparently speak for themselves. The great undertaking, however, is illustrative of the scale on which private ownership is understood in South America—although even here, of course, this particular case is exceptional. In another place I have stated that the important estanciero thinks only in tens of thousands of cattle, but in connexion with these properties it is necessary to multiply by ten again.

Situated in the north and east of the Republic as are the Lemco farms, almost all the pedigree bulls imported are—with the exception of some

HEREFORD CATTLE

IN THE SHADE OF THE EUCALYPTUS

Polled-Angus cattle—of Hereford stock. By this procedure the company follows the accepted rules of the country as regards breed; for, speaking generally, Buenos Aires is the land of the shorthorn, and Entre Rios as well as Uruguay the home of the Hereford.

It has already been explained how the English agricultural districts are now being ransacked for the supply of pedigree stock for the *campo*. Perhaps I can give no clearer instance of this than that afforded by the following table, with which the company has kindly supplied me. It represents rather an astonishing emigration of bovine aristocracy to the various Lemco and Oxo estancias.

Name.	Sex.	Year Purchased.	Name and Address of Breeder.
Loadstone	Bull	1901	A. C. Fenn, Ludlow
Red Ensign	,,	1903	J. Hill, Orleton
Chapter	,,	,,	E. Farr, Pembridge
Sir Christopher	,,	,,	,, ,,
Tyrant	,,	,,	A. Turner, Pembridge
Early English	,,	,,	W. T. Barnaby, Bromyard
Sparkle	,,	,,	A. Robinson, Kington
Banquo	,,	,,	J. Hill, Orleton
Banker	,,	,,	A. Turner, Pembridge
Beira	Heifer	,,	J. Edwards, ,,
Marcella	,,	,,	A. P. Turner, ,,
Valkyr	,,	,,	,, ,,
Zephyr	,,	,,	J. Hill, Orleton
Lady Wilton	,,	,,	,, ,,
Nectarine	,,	,,	A. F. Russell, Pembridge
Pyon Director	Bull	,,	Evans, The Hill
Pyon Sampson	,,	,,	,, ,,
Pyon Commander	,,	,,	,, ,,
Pyon Admiral	,,	,,	,, ,,
Marchant	,,	,,	,, Perry Ditch
Pirate	,,	,,	,, Lynch
Gay Lad	,,	,,	Morris, Weston Court
Thicket	,,	,,	Moore, Brampton Briar
Ferrier	,,	,,	,, ,,
Testator	,,	,,	,, ,,
Hopeful 21st	,,	,,	Green, Wigmore
Thane	,,	,,	J. Hill, Orleton

Name.	Sex.	Year Purchased.	Name and Address of Breeder.
Sapphire	Heifer	1903	J. Hill, Orleton
May Queen	,,	,,	,, ,,
Etna	,,	,,	,, ,,
Feather Stick	,,	,,	,, ,,
Bella	,,	,,	,, ,,
Andafuma	,,	,,	,, ,,
Cora	,,	,,	Evans, The Hill
Dewdrop	,,	,,	,, ,,
Rubella	,,	,,	,, Perry Ditch
Heather	,,	,,	,, Lynch
Gileen	,,	,,	,, ,,
Primrose	,,	,,	Turner, Leen
Livia	,,	,,	,, ,,
Russet	,,	,,	Farr, Noke
Fireball	Bull	abt. 1904	H.M. The King, Windsor
Revolter	,,	1905	Rees, Kenne
Montford Peer	,,	,,	T. L. Minton
Peter II	,,	,,	G. H. Green
Montford Patriot	,,	,,	T. L. Minton
Spangle 73	Heifer	,,	G. H. Green
Lilac 26	,,	,,	,, ,,
Galore	Bull	,,	A. Turner, Pembridge
Hamlet	,,	,,	J. Hill, Orleton
Fancy Work	Heifer	,,	,, ,,
Thimble	,,	,,	,, ,,
Bowstring	Bull	,,	Compton, Leominster
Acorn	,,	,,	Turner, Pembridge
Rufus	,,	,,	,, ,,
Leopold	,,	,,	Evans, Leominster
Gold Star	,,	,,	Hughes, ,,
Premier	,,	,,	A. E. Hughes, ,,
Berrington	,,	,,	J. R. Hill, Orleton
Sweetness	Heifer	,,	Compton, Leominster
Primitive	,,	,,	,, ,,
Summer Court Plum	,,	,,	Tudge, Kington
Countess Sarah	,,	,,	T. Fenn, Ludlow
Geisha	,,	,,	A. P. Turner, Pembridge
Erica	,,	,,	,, ,,
Dulcimer	,,	,,	E. Farr, Court of Stoke
Sweet Nancy	,,	,,	,, ,,
Joan	,,	,,	,, ,,
Saucy	,,	,,	Wm. Tait, The Royal Farms, Windsor
Dulcie	,,	,,	,, ,,
Soubrette	,,	,,	,, ,,
Theakston Trumpeter	Bull	,,	McIntyre, Theakston Hall, Beadle, Yorks
Theakston Roving Pride	Heifer	,,	,, ,,
Roving Vixen of Theakston	,,	,,	,, ,,
Duenna of Theakston	,,	,,	,, ,,
Rendlesham Loo Loo	,,	,,	Smith, Woodbridge, Suffolk
Eyke Dairy Girl	,,	,,	,, ,,
Proud Egmont	Bull	,,	T. H. Bainbridge, Eshott Hall, Felton, Northumberland
Marmion of Eshott	,,	,,	,, ,,
Eileen Royal	Heifer	,,	,, ,,

Name.	Sex.	Year Purchased.	Name and Address of Breeder.
Venus of Eshott	Heifer	1905	T. H. Bainbridge, Eshott Hall, Felton, Northumberland
Merle of Eshott	,,	,,	,, ,,
Black Egmonta	,,	,,	,, ,,
Black Egmont	Bull	1906	,, Eshott Home Farm
Morpeth	,,	,,	,, ,,
Inca of Eshott	,,	,,	,, ,,
Rose Royal	Heifer	,,	,, ,,
Melba of Eshott	,,	,,	,, ,,
Eulalie of Eshott	,,	,,	,, ,,
Black Eugenie	,,	,,	,, ,,
Lilian	,,	,,	H.M. The King, Windsor
Beryl	,,	,,	,, ,,
Eleanor	,,	,,	,, ,,
Ariel	,,	,,	,, ,,
Claret	,,	1907	Capt. E. L. A. Heygate, Leominster
Cornflower	,,	,,	,, ,,
Flounce	,,	,,	,, ,,
Nelson's Accident	,,	,,	W. T. Barnaby, Bromyard
Petrol	,,	,,	,, ,,
Twyford Lupa	,,	,,	Jas. Edwards, Twyford
Twyford Ketmah	,,	,,	,, ,,
Rosebud	,,	,,	W. Trudge, Kington
Viceroy	Bull	,,	,, ,,
Whiteheart	Heifer	,,	H. W. Russell, Pembridge
Agnes	,,	,,	Jas. Evans, Leominster
Sunbeam	,,	,,	W. Tudge, Kington
Golden Star	,,	,,	John Tudge, Craven Arms, Salop
Di Vernon	,,	1908	Wm. Tudge
Egyptian Queen	,,	,,	,,
Lucinda	,,	1909	H.M. The King, Windsor
Salome	,,	,,	,, ,,
Edelamere	Bull	,,	T. H. Bainbridge, Felton
Ponteland	,,	,,	,, ,,
Nine Square	,,	,,	J. W. Millyard, Bromyard (W. T. Barneby, Breeder)
Elsie of Eshott	Heifer	,,	T. H. Bainbridge
Elbrilie of Eshott	,,	,,	,, ,,
Ringleader	Bull	,,	W. T. Barneby, Bromyard
Radiant	,,	,,	,, ,,

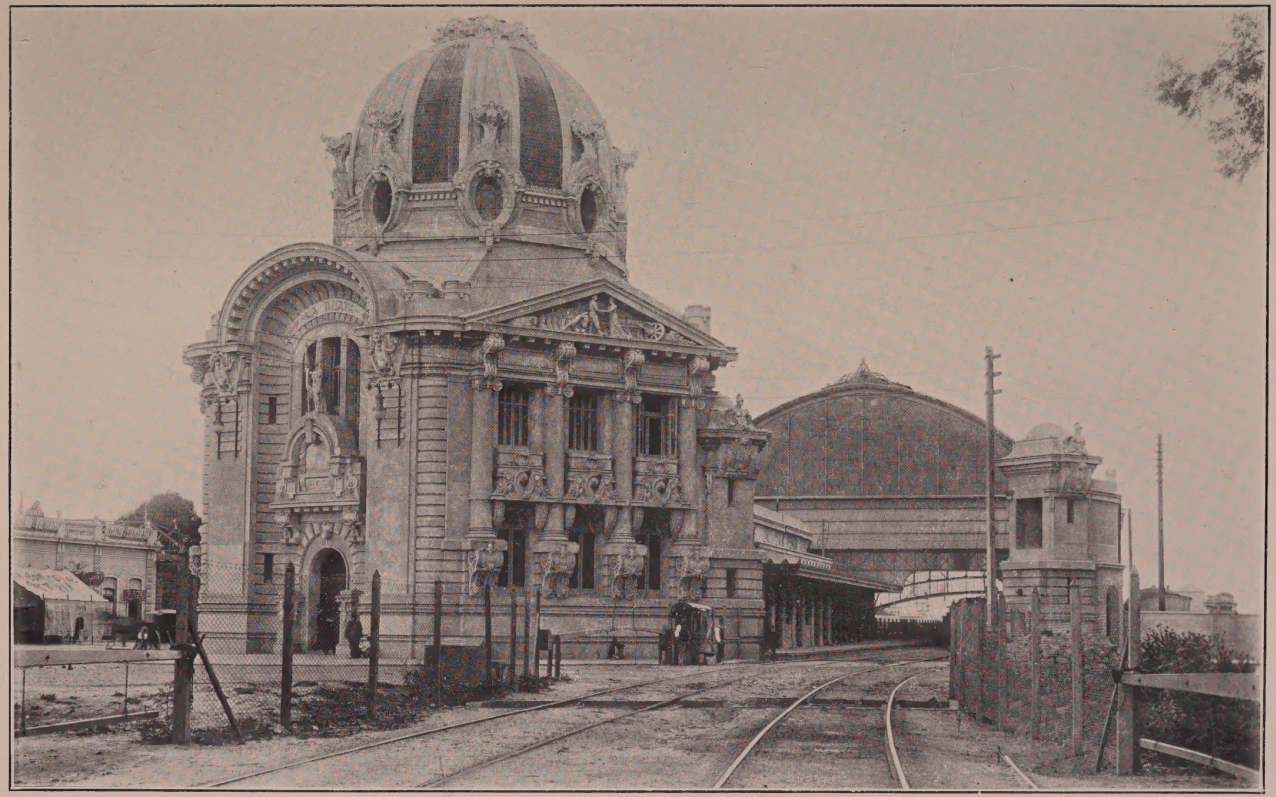
As an instance of the importance of Argentina as a purchaser of British live-stock, this lengthy table is not a little instructive.

CHAPTER XXXIV

RAILWAYS AND SHIPPING

British Enterprise and its Management—The Great Southern—An Imposing Line—Area Served—Development of the Company—Ports of the Railway—The Buenos Aires and Pacific—The Transandine Route—Benefits accruing from the New Line—Eastern and Western Freights—The Central Argentine—A Comprehensive Service—The Buenos Aires Western—The Côrdoba Central; Côrdoba and Rosario; Midland, and Buenos Aires Central—The Entre Rios Railways—Ramifications of the Company—New Era of the Province—The Argentine North-Eastern—Description of the Company's System—The Road to Paraguay—Ports and Places of Interest—Shipping Companies—The Royal Mail—Methods of the Premier Line—Enterprise and its Reward—Many-sided Stewards—An Entertainment at Sea.

In no other branch of Argentine industry is the British capitalist so deeply interested as in that of the railways. On the whole he has undoubtedly chosen wisely, since these important enterprises are for the most part admirably managed and engineered, and, moreover, serve a country the industrial area of which is yearly becoming not only more extensive but more valuable. But upon the commercial prospects I will not dilate at length here. Let it suffice to say that, in addition to the excellent material employed, the officials assuredly personify



MAR DEL PLATA: THE NEW RAILWAY STATION

an especially high grade of capability and worth. The highest posts, indeed, are held by men out of whose number more than one has returned home to assume control of a famous English line.

Since this particular chapter deals only with British enterprise, I am not including within it the fine system of state railways, nor that of the several French companies that serve various provinces and districts. Taking the railways in geographical order from south to north, the first is the Great Southern. This very important line—one of old standing, generally hailed as the premier railroad of the country—serves the rich districts of central and southern Buenos Aires province. The chief goal to which it attains is the thriving and rapidly waxing port of Bahia Blanca, a centre that the railway has been directly instrumental in bringing into being. Between the capital and the southern port a network of Great Southern lines now extends, which converge to the south into three routes, by any of which Bahia Blanca may be entered.

The Great Southern has recently flung out a very important tentacle due west from Bahia Blanca. Passing through the territory of the Rio Negro, it terminates for the present at Neuquen. That the move is a wise one there can be little doubt, since this western country, hitherto much neglected, needs only transit facilities and irrigation in certain parts in order to bring its fertility up to a level approaching that of Buenos Aires. Indeed, it is

certain enough that the development of these new districts will be interesting to watch.

It is unlikely, however, that the western terminus of the railway will remain anywhere in the neighbourhood of Neuquen for long. A southward branch to the magnificent country in the vicinity of Lake Nahuel Huapi is now both feasible and to be recommended. Once within hail of the Andes, moreover, as is now the railhead, it is more than probable that the mountains themselves will be crossed, and a new route thus opened into Chile. Such a scheme is much facilitated by the formation of the Andes themselves, whose heights in these latitudes have sunk sufficiently to permit a passage without the necessity of tunnelling through the rock.

Amongst the many branches of the railway is one which connects the city of Buenos Aires with that of La Plata, the provincial capital and port. Another bears due south to the fashionable seaside resort of Mar del Plata, and quite especially luxurious trains ply to and fro with this bracing haunt of the wealthy as their southern terminus.

Nearly all the ramifications of the line extend through flat country. The sole elevations met with comprise the Sierra de Ventana, north of Bahia Blanca, and the hills that surround Tandil, further to the east.

The principal freight items of the company consist of cattle and sheep, frozen meat, grain, maize, cereals in general, fruit, vegetables, and fish.

IN THE CÓRDOBA HILLS

The Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway, with which is now incorporated the Great Western and the Transandine, serves two distinct areas, one in the south, and the other in the centre and west. This latter is the original main line, leading over the Andes to Chile, and it is in connexion with this that one of the most important developments in Argentine commercial history has just been brought about. With the completion of the Andes tunnel the line of iron is now—or should be by the time of the appearance of this book—continuous throughout from Buenos Aires to Valparaiso on the Pacific coast. Thus the mules and wagons that, until now, have served as the carrying agents of passengers and goods over the mountain passes will go the way of so many other instruments, once indispensable, now of no further utility.

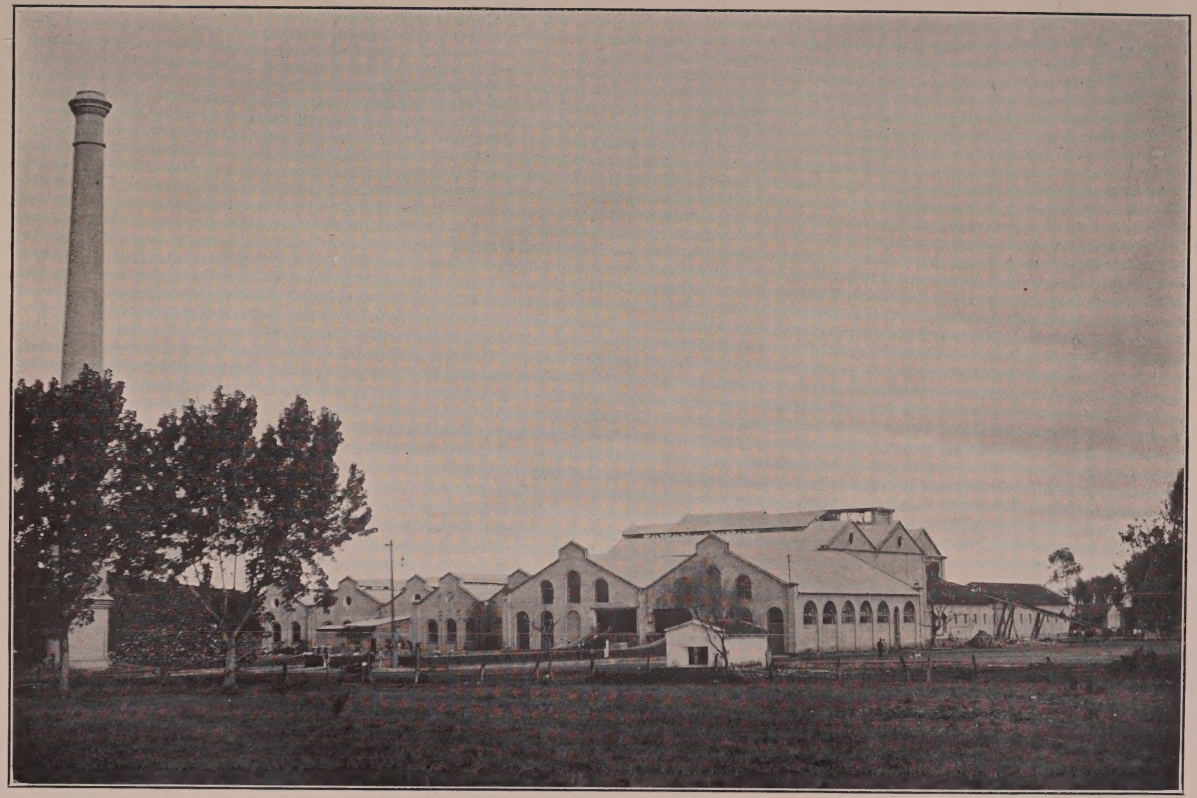
The financial cost of the feat has, of course, been great; more serious, indeed, than was at first anticipated, since the unexpectedly crumbling nature of the subterranean rock gave rise to increased difficulties and expense. The commercial results, however, are likely to be noteworthy enough. To say nothing of the rapid transit of passengers and the lighter kinds of goods that is now possible, the carriage of even such heavy commodities as cattle must necessarily be affected in a beneficent manner. In the past the arduous journey over the sterile rock of the heights was invariably wont to cause a marked loss in the weight of the animals that will

now be obviated. This, however, constitutes only one of the minor advantages that the new route offers.

It goes without saying that the benefits accruing to Chile from the all-iron road are enormous. It has, however, been objected that the promise of the return traffic of goods from west to east is disproportionately scanty. That the eastward-bound freights can ever rival the westward is certainly out of the question under existing circumstances. It would be rash, however, to speak with too great certainty on a point such as this. The possibilities of traffic can seldom be estimated until the institution of the enterprise, since the actual presence of the line is frequently responsible for varieties of freight that had not previously been counted upon.

The southern system of the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway is now, of course, of immense importance, serving as it does to link the central inland districts with the south as well as with the original main line, and for the first time giving many portions of the province of La Pampa access to the port of Bahia Blanca.

With the notable exception of the Andes themselves, and of a few minor elevations in the San Luis and La Pampa provinces, the country traversed by the Buenos Aires and Pacific is flat. The principal freight items are cattle and sheep, frozen meat, cereals in general, vegetables, fruit, firewood, and the very large quantity of wine and grapes for which the provinces of Mendoza and San Juan are responsible.



A TUCUMAN SUGAR FACTORY

The Central Argentine is another very important railway that traverses northern Buenos Aires, Santa Fé, and Córdoba, with a northern extension that serves the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Tucuman. Amongst its other ramifications, the company connects the ocean port of Buenos Aires with the great river ports of Rosario and Santa Fé; many of the agricultural districts, moreover, through which the lines pass are exceptionally rich.

The products carried by the Central Argentine are more varied than those of the southern railways. In addition to the live-stock, cereals, meat, wine, fruit, and firewood, it deals with hard timber and quebracho railway sleepers. Lime and charcoal are fairly important items, and much sugar is borne from Tucuman, the head quarters of the industry. Although the line at its extremities of Córdoba and Tucuman leads to the threshold of a mountainous district, almost the entire country traversed is level plain.

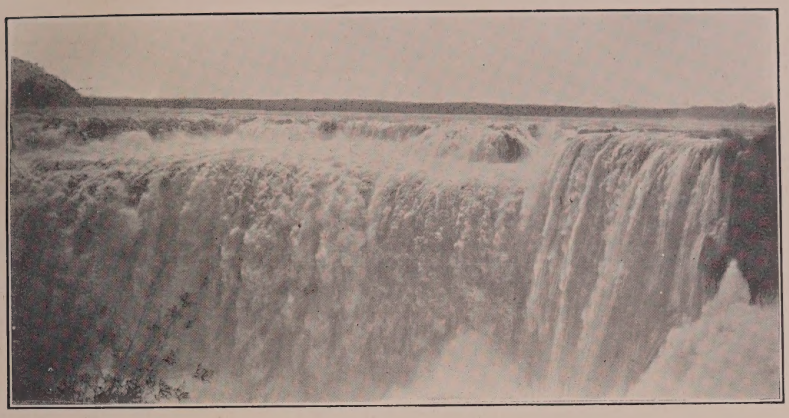
The Buenos Aires Western sends out its lines due west from the port of Buenos Aires, and serves that peculiarly fertile country that extends between the seaboard and the province of San Luis, in addition to a portion of La Pampa. Although the line is concerned with comparatively few cities of any size, its great importance must not be underestimated, since the system is one of those that taps the very heart of the agricultural districts. Passing over level country, the freights of the line are those of

the *campo* proper, such as grain, live-stock, and the like.

Other railways of growing importance are the Córdoba Central, the Córdoba and Rosario, the Midland, and the Buenos Aires Central. To pass, however, from these to others whose vicissitudes, although financially of no greater interest, appeal more to the public imagination, we come first of all to the Entre Rios Railway.

From the point of view of dramatic interest as well as from that of normal traffic, the work of the Entre Rios Railway stands second to none in the Republic. Quite recently this enterprising company has caused nothing less than a revolution in the industrial ethics of at least one province. Until a couple of years ago Entre Rios stood to a great extent alone. The history of the fertile province 'between the rivers' corresponds to this isolation even from the time of the *conquistadores* themselves. Suffering from civil strife; at the mercy of lawless bands that, in the name of revolution, plundered and ravaged at their own desperate will; resentful of interference from without, and brooking no order within—the troubles of the province during the middle ages of colonisation were almost without cessation.

During the later ordered epoch the evidence of this isolation has continued, although in another, and more negative, form. The waters of the Paraná remained as a barrier to the south and west; those of the Uruguay shut off the east. Dependent upon



THE MAIN FALL: IGUAZÚ

THE IGUAZÚ FALLS

water traffic alone, the intercourse between the province and the great centres to the south and west was sparse to a degree in comparison with that enjoyed by the remainder of the Republic.

The effect of this upon the estancias could not fail to be harmful. With the absence of an incentive towards a higher standard of breeding, the quality of both cattle and sheep, the rich pastures of the land notwithstanding, compared unfavourably with that of the central herds and flocks. For all its actual and considerable progress, Entre Rios remained without the pale of first-class pasture rank. Some half-dozen model estancias it possessed, it is true; as for the rest, the rich land suffered the inevitable penalty of isolation in its ethics both of economy and society. The lower classes of the *Entreriano* continued to partake, however unwillingly, in the heritage of their forefathers' repute. To many on the west of the Paraná, Entre Rios remained a country of lawlessness and of strange and fabulous doings.

Now, by the institution of the great ferry-boats that receive the trains from the Buenos Aires Central lines at Zárate and that steam with them upstream to Ibicuy, the province of Entre Rios has been brought into direct railway communication with Buenos Aires and the south. The result upon the industries of the province is already striking, though it is certain enough that the end of the movement is not yet in sight.

Another railway, the Argentine North-Eastern,

is of great interest at the present moment, since it is about to link the Republic of Paraguay with that of Argentina. As this in itself will suffice to cause great benefit to the commerce of the far north, the railway is worthy of a lengthy description, with which Mr. J. L. Harper, its general manager in Argentina, has kindly furnished me.

The region served by the Argentine North-Eastern Railway comprises northern Entre Rios, the province of Corrientes and southern Misiones. The main system of the railway as at present constituted consists of a single line from the city and port of Concordia to Monte Caseros, both on the River Uruguay. A short distance above this town the main line splits into two, one branch passing through the towns of Curuzú Cuatiá, Mercedes, San Roque, Saladas, and Empedrado, with its final destination the city of Corrientes.

The eastern line follows up the River Uruguay as far as Santo Tomé, passing through Paso de los Libres, Yapeyú, La Cruz, and Alvear. In addition to these two lines there is in construction a branch fifty-five miles long from San Diego on the western line to the important port of Goya on the River Paraná, and the prolongation of the eastern line as far as Posadas, the capital of Misiones. The Goya branch will be finished this year and the Posadas extension early in 1911; the total length of the railway will then consist of 666 miles.

Communication between the company's southern

THE PROGRESS OF SHIPPING: LAUNCH OF THE *FORTH*, 1841

terminus at Concordia and Buenos Aires is obtained either by train over the Entre Rios Railway and Ferry Boat and the Buenos Aires Central Railway, or by river with Messrs. Mihanovichs' fine steamers, the time occupied by either route being from eighteen to twenty hours.

Once the railway is completed to Posadas, and the Paraguayan Railway constructed down to Villa Encarnacion in front of that town, which should occur about the same time, it will be possible for travellers to reach Asuncion by train from Buenos Aires in under fifty hours, while the falls of the Iguazú will also be within comparatively easy reach of the capital.

The country traversed by the railway is of a diversified character, rolling grassy downs of excellent pasturage predominating in the south and extending as far as Mercedes on the western branch and to Yapeyú on the eastern side.

Following the western branch and crossing the River Corrientes by a fine bridge more than a mile in length, one finds oneself in a swampy country with many reedy lakes and belts of palm forest. Further north quebracho forests begin to come into evidence, while the small towns passed are embowered in orange trees and other subtropical vegetation, the land, where free from inundation, being of great fertility, and excellently suited for the production of maize, tobacco, cotton, mandioca, pea nuts, and sweet potatoes.

On the eastern side the country between Yapeyú and Santo Tomé is low and swampy; but above that town it becomes very broken and picturesque, terminating in a low range of rocky wooded hills, the outlying spurs of which are crossed near Apostoles by the new extension to Posadas now under construction. The soil of Misiones is, especially in the forests, of a wonderful fertility and gives splendid crops of maize, tobacco, and other growths.

The principal towns are Concordia, 25,000 inhabitants, a thriving commercial town and port on the Uruguay; Curuzú Cuatiá, and Mercedes, 7000 inhabitants each, centres of pastoral districts; Goya, 10,000 inhabitants, a good port on the Paraná river; Corrientes, 18,000 inhabitants, capital of the province, but of little importance commercially; and Santo Tomé, 7000 inhabitants, which does a thriving trade with southern Misiones in hides, tobacco, and general products.

The small towns are Monte Caseros, the seat of the railway administration and shops; San Roque; Saladas, centre of an agricultural district; Empedrado, a port of some importance on the Paraná; Paso de los Libres, in front of Uruguayana in Brazil; Yapeyú, birthplace of General San Martin; La Cruz, an old Jesuit settlement, and Alvear.

The principal items of traffic at present carried are oranges, posts and timber, wool, cattle, and hides. As the country becomes more populated, however, agricultural produce will probably, especially in the

THE PROGRESS OF SHIPPING: THE *ORINOCO*, 1851

north, begin to play a more important part than it does at present.

The town of Posadas, the capital of Misiones, should in the future, when the extension is finished, become rather an important centre, as it will form from its situation an excellent point of departure for intending visitors to Paraguay, the Jesuit ruins in Misiones, and the falls of the Iguazú.

Some of the ruins of the old Jesuit missions, from which the territory takes its name, are well worthy of a visit, both from an historical point of view and from their picturesque surroundings, set as they are in tropical vegetation of the most luxuriant description. The finest of all are those at San Ignacio, six hours' journey by steamer above Posadas, but interesting examples are also to be seen at Apostoles, some three miles away from the station of that name on the new line to Posadas, and at Santa Maria Mayor, thirty miles distant from the same station.

The River Alto Paraná above Posadas is of great beauty, flowing between high and precipitous bluffs clothed in tropical forest, broken occasionally by a clearing where some wood-fellers are at work, or by a small stream tumbling into the main river, forming, perhaps, a fine cascade visible from the steamer's deck.

At the distance of some two hundred and forty miles above Posadas the River Iguazú, which forms the dividing line between Argentina and

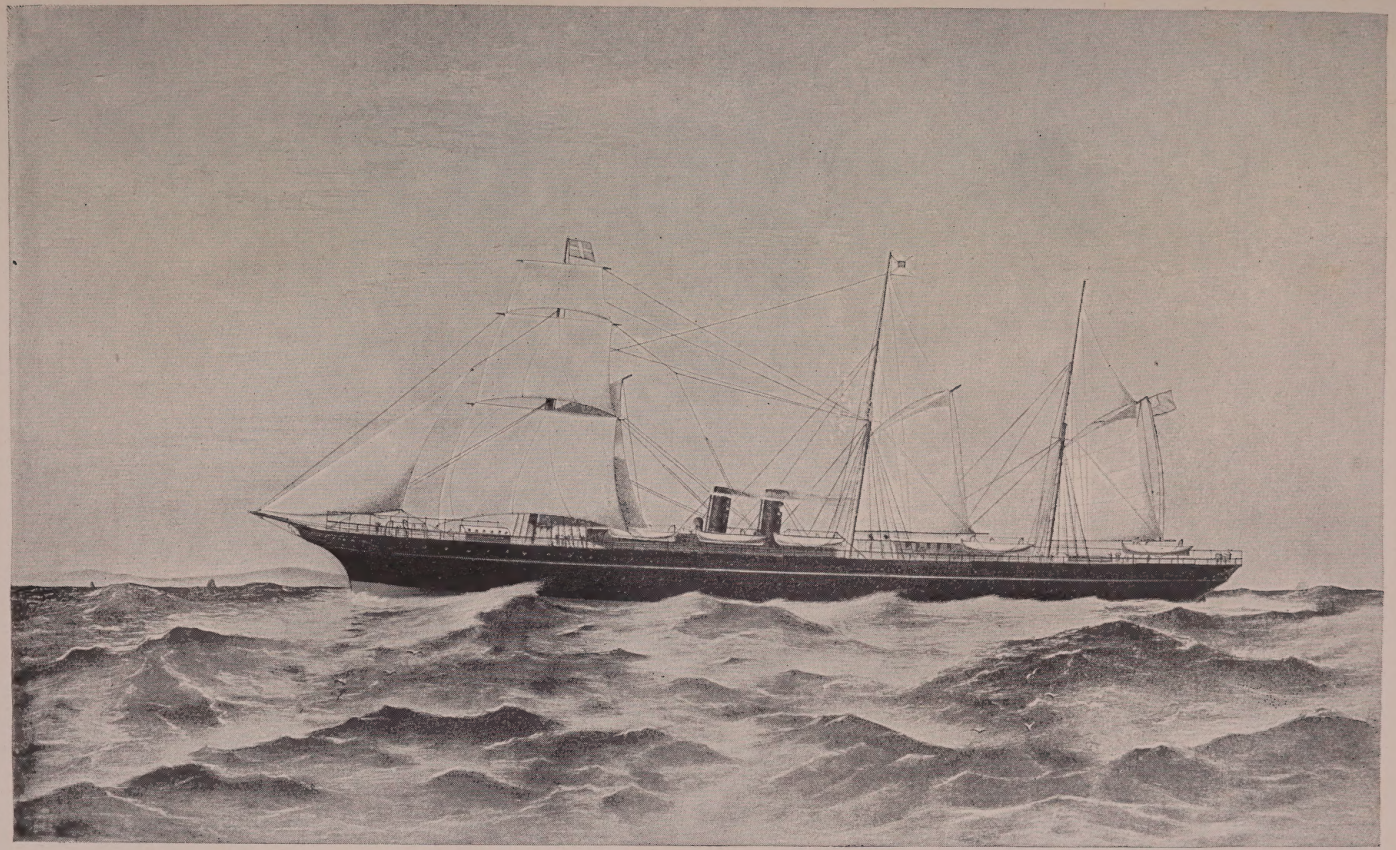
Brazil, empties itself through a deep gorge into the Paraná.

About half a mile up from the point of junction is situated Port Aguirre, consisting of a wooden hut which combines under its shingle roof the functions of hotel, store, and post office, all of the most primitive description.

From this point the visitor can either proceed by coach or on muleback to the falls eighteen kilometres distant, where, after travelling over a rough road cut through dense tropical forest, he will find another primitive hut or self-styled hotel for his accommodation. The many deficiencies in food and housing are, however, at least to the lover of nature, well repaid by the magnificent view obtainable from the hotel verandah, especially in the morning, when the mists are still hanging about the hillsides.

The house is situated on the edge of a rocky ravine, down which boils a roaring torrent, and from this elevated perch the eye wanders over a sea of forest below and around, tossed now high in the air, now in deep hollows, according to the undulations of the ground. Through breaks in the foliage can be distinguished the different falls. In the far distance are the main or Brazilian ones, above which floats a cloud of brilliant white spray ; in the middle distance, the Argentine falls, and close at hand one or two smaller ones whose thunder fills the air.

Zig-zag paths cut down the cliff face lead across the ravine, and from thence to different points from



THE PROGRESS OF SHIPPING: THE *MEDWAY*, 1854

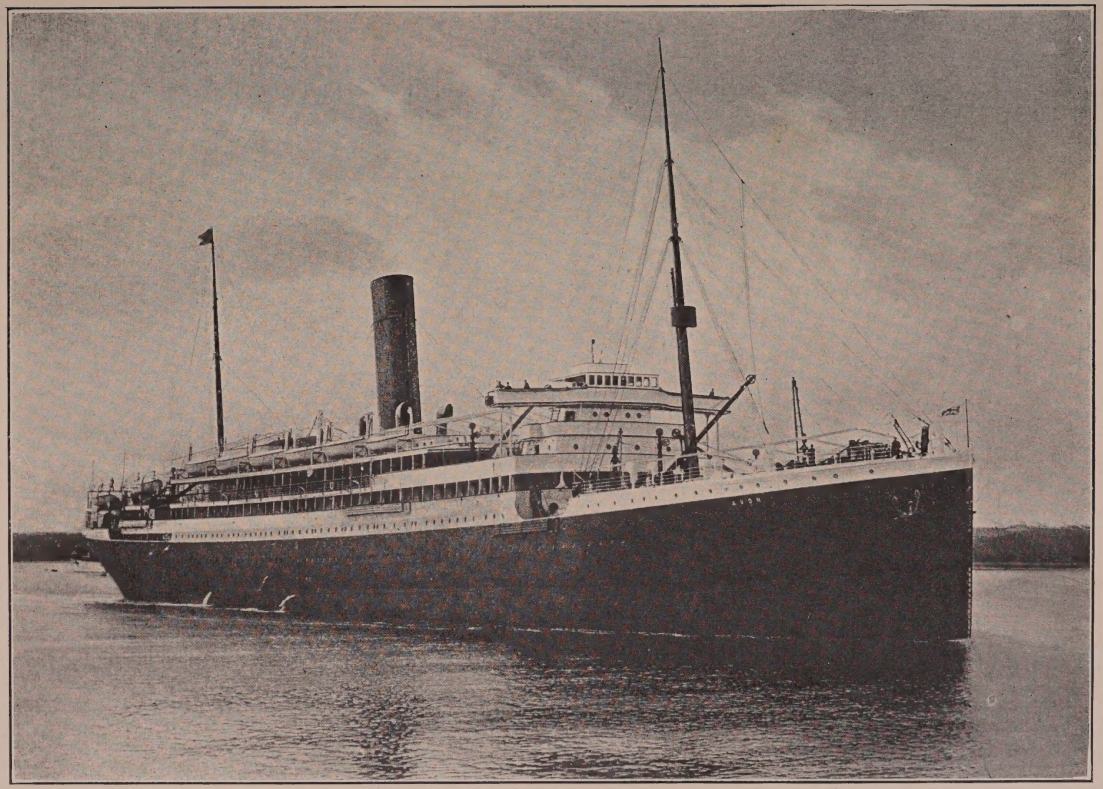
which good views of the different falls can be obtained. One of the finest commands the rocky gorge down which foams the main stream of the Iguazú, at the head of which, about a thousand yards away, the Brazilian falls may be discerned, smothered in drifting clouds.

When the stream is low it is possible to cross the river above the falls by canoe and by wading, and to reach a point called the 'Garganta del Diablo,' above, and in close proximity to, the main or Brazilian falls. Here the traveller may, providing his head be good, crane his neck over the precipice and obtain a magnificent view of the abyss into which the river launches itself, while a gale of wind created by the rush of the water howls round his ears, and blasts of spray shower a continual rain around him.

In low water, the Brazilian and Argentine falls, horse-shoe in shape, measure probably eight hundred yards each round their edges, and in height from two hundred to two hundred and fifty feet. They are separated from each other by masses of rocks, in some places heavily clothed in forest, through which occasionally bursts a small fall. When, however, the river is in flood, the view is still more magnificent, as under such conditions all the falls are practically united in one tremendous whole, measuring some four thousand yards in length, and worthy in the estimation of many to be ranked in magnitude with Niagara, while incomparably wilder in their surroundings.

So much for British railway enterprise in the Republic—a record of which the fellow-countrymen of the various directors, engineers, and officials may well feel proud. British shipping enterprise, too, may undoubtedly be looked upon with similar satisfaction. The companies interested in this branch of traffic are now numerous, and almost every line represented is up to date in its methods, a procedure, indeed, that is indispensable considering the competition that has now been brought into being by the large and modern Italian and German craft. For some reason or other, the French liners have fallen a little from the van of progress, which is to be regretted considering the excellent traditions of the Messageries Maritimes.

Thus the British lines—the Pacific, Lamport and Holt, Houlder, Nelson, Prince, Houston, and the New Zealand Shipping Company, and Shaw, Savill vessels that call at Monte Video on their homeward-bound trips from the antipodes, afford an ample and able service. The best known of all English lines, however, is, of course, the Royal Mail. As a matter of fact, it is no more possible to think of Argentina without calling to mind the R.M.S.P. than it is to remember India without throwing a passing thought to the P. and O. I have before now alluded to the Royal Mail; but I make no apology for referring to the subject once again, since on each occasion when I have had occasion to employ it, some new phase in its existence has been noticeable.



R.M.S.P.: PRESENT DAY

Indeed, the progress of a shipping company contains as much interest in its way as that of a country, since each of its modern units is almost equivalent in population to that of a small town. The transition from a condition of cramped space, smoky oil illumination, and accommodation directly over the throbbing screw, such as was the best obtainable throughout the world some thirty years ago, to that of broad decks where sports, concerts, and dances obtain, lifts, orchestras, gymnasiums, and amazingly spacious saloons and general rooms—a transition such as this spells history quite as accurately in its way as the lines graven on the pedestal of a famous statue on shore.

This metamorphosis of the R.M.S.P., for one, is instructive of more than the progress of the company alone. So closely have the destinies of the latter been associated with those of the Republic that the fortunes of the nation have invariably been linked with those of the premier line. Thus from the original paddle steamers and the later craft of comparatively modest dimensions has been evolved the present stately type of vessel, the magnificently appointed ten or twelve thousand tonner. As an instance of the actual growth of tonnage, it should be explained that from the fourteen small vessels with which the company commenced operations, the tonnage of the fleet had leaped in 1901 to 85,144 tons. In 1906 it had increased again to 165,511 tons, while last year the grand total had swollen to

exactly 77 tons short of 210,000, a record worthy of the line.

The company, of course, is no newcomer on the high seas. In 1909 it celebrated the seventieth anniversary of its foundation. Thus on the twenty-ninth of September of that year all the Royal Mail vessels, in whichever part of the world they happened to be, broke out into a profusion of bunting for the occasion, and went in gaudy—if widely separated—procession, doubtless much to the astonishment of other passing ships.

If I dilate unduly upon the merits of the line, the fault is at the door of a very genuine admiration for methods which I should like to see employed on every British passenger-ship. Apart from the natural advantages brought about by the varied series of the ports of call, the voyage in itself is apt to pass all too quickly. From the hour when the great tarpaulin swimming-bath resounds to the splashing of its occupants to that of the evening episode, whether it take the shape of a dance or a concert, the entertainments are astonishingly varied.

I cannot acquit the company, for one thing, of disingenuous motives in the choice of its stewards. As for the latter, the majority undoubtedly possess two sides to their character. The difference between a being who is soberly laying out evening clothes before the dining hour, and that other, a short while later, who is performing on the boards of the theatre set up on the well deck, is such that it is

FIREMEN'S BAND AND MENAGERIE: R.M.S.P. *AMAZON*

difficult to believe that the two characters are made up of one and the same person. For much of the talent displayed by the steward companies on the ten thousand ton boats savours not in the least of the amateur. Indeed, it is my firm belief that the average R.M.S.P. steward is sternly forced to pass a dramatic and musical examination ere securing admittance to the line.

One of the most dramatic incidents of its kind that I have ever witnessed at sea occurred on the night of one of these concerts. Beneath the brilliant moonlight of the tropics the artificial glare of the electrically lit theatre down in the well deck shone upon the various tiers of decks, each crowded as fully with spectators as the galleries of a land theatre. Suddenly the hull of an old and small tramp steamer, overtaken by the liner, came into view close alongside, and then fell behind. The clearness of the night revealed the small craft, with its few dim lights, almost as plainly as though it were daylight. Upon the low bridge a couple of forms were evident, their attitude plainly showing that they were staring with all their eyes. What they must have thought of the scene that lit up the ocean—the theatre and its company of pierrots, the hundreds of spectators in the various tiers of serried ranks—would be interesting to know. It is not every night that such a spectacle, leaping out from the dark waters, is accorded to the occupants of the humble 'tramp'!

In one instance, at least, however, the stewards

are faced with formidable competition within the sides of their own ship. The firemen of the *Amazon* afford the case in point. Those who have witnessed the procession round the decks of their human menagerie, accompanied by its excellent comb and drum band, are not likely to forget the episode if they be possessed of a sense of humour! For screaming farce the entertainment is purely admirable. But I have already given too much space to such items of mere recreation. Their importance, I think, lies in the evidence on the part of the highest and lowest of that spirit which is so sternly essential to British mercantile shipping in these days—a spirit that, when seen, should be noted and copied—that of enterprise! The trait is one that a connexion with the Republic of Argentina will certainly repay.

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By W. H. KOEBEL

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'The first tale is the best; it reaches a high level of finished pathos. But it is in good company. All the stories in this New Zealand batch have a fine colour, and many possess deeper qualities as well.'—*Morning Leader.*

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